

Reflections of Sandra

*The Inspirational Story of How a Mother's
Passing Brought Her Daughter to Life*

Michelle Heynen

Reflections of Sandra: The Inspirational Story of How a Mother's Passing Brought Her Daughter to Life © Michelle Heynen 2016

The moral rights of Michelle Heynen to be identified as the author of this work have been asserted in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

First published in Australia 2016

Published with the assistance of InHouse Publishing, Queensland.

www.inhousepublishing.com.au

www.reflectionsofsandra.com

ISBN 978-0-9944581-3-1

Any opinions expressed in this work are exclusively those of the author and are not necessarily the views held or endorsed by InHouse Publishing.

Creative Commons *Rosey Beginning* by Renee is licenced under CC BY 2.0 / Converted to greyscale. Link: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/playingwithpsp/4264696748/>

Proofread by Wendy Millgate, Wendy & Words

Typeset by Book Polishers

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic, photocopying or otherwise, without prior written permission of the author.

Disclaimer

All the information, techniques, skills and concepts contained within this publication are of the nature of general comment only, and are not in any way recommended as individual advice. The intent is to offer a variety of information to provide a wider range of choices now and in the future, recognising that we all have widely diverse circumstances and viewpoints. Should any reader choose to make use of the information herein, this is their decision, and the author and publisher/s do not assume any responsibilities whatsoever under any conditions or circumstances. The author does not take responsibility for the business, financial, personal or other success, results or fulfilment upon the reader's decision to use this information. It is recommended that the reader obtain their own independent advice.

This book is dedicated to the most amazing woman I have ever met – my mother Sandra – whose loving spirit still sustains me and will forever be with me.

This book is also my thank you to all of the beautiful people who supported my family and me over the last couple of years. Words cannot express how grateful I am.

It is also my way of letting all of the amazing people in this world – some I have met and some I haven't – who battle with dark days and know that they can get through them.

Testimonials

I remember the first time that Michelle and I ever spoke. She expressed her desire to write a book about her mother's passing: first of all, to honour her mother and, secondly, to show people that they can become stronger as a result of the adversity that we sometimes face in life. I recall how tentative Michelle was about writing the book and how openly she welcomed my encouragement. Today, I could not be prouder of her for having the courage to follow the inner calling that has led this book to be in your hands.

Reflections of Sandra is a heart-touching story that will give you every reason to appreciate the people who are in your life today. It will remind you to live every second as though it is your last. It will also give you the courage to transcend your tough times – no matter how crippling they might feel at the time when you are experiencing them – and find the light inside the darkness.

I hope you enjoy it the same way that I did, and that Michelle's courage to find the truth of love inside her greatest challenges will inspire you to be stronger in everything that you do.

Emily Gowor, Author

Michelle shines a bright light into one of life's most profoundly difficult experiences...the passing of a dearly loved mother. With courage and insight Michelle has shared her life's struggles and shows us her unique vision for moving through the complexity of grief. She then helps us to realise the life altering lessons hiding inside the sorrow, then shares with us her new wisdom as she discovers a new way of life...one that is reborn with purpose. This book will connect with and help many people who are struggling with the loss of a loved one and provide them with a depth of solace and hope for the future...well done, Michelle.

Megan Freeland
Author

Michelle Heynen's Reflections of Sandra tells of her mother's battle with cancer. This beautiful book helps with the difficult process and dealing with emotions during this difficult time. It gives you strength, courage and shows you there is a light at the end of the tunnel, even through the darkness of it all.

Nicole Crowhurst
Friend



Foreword

Michelle was born in Goondiwindi, one month premature. As a result, she spent the first month of her life in the hospital, and we found out she was a lot sicker than we were first led to believe. We only discovered because one day her mother and I were walking down the main street and we met a nurse from the hospital. We introduced Michelle to her and she remarked, “Oh, that is the one that nearly died.”

We were completely dumbfounded by this comment as we had no idea. All seemed fine when she was finally allowed to come home, although feeding her was difficult. Michelle progressed slowly and, after starting primary school, it soon became clear that all was not well.

The janitor of the school, who knew our family well, had found Michelle wandering in a daze on the playground when she should have been in the classroom, and nobody else had seemed to notice she was missing. After this happened for a second time, we decided it was time to see a doctor, but it took a lot of to convince him that something was not quite right with Michelle. Michelle was referred to a specialist in Ipswich, who put her on some sort of medication. However, this medication changed her condition instead of fixing it.

When we would sit at the table, Michelle would blink on and off, and we soon realised that she was having mini fits. However, all did seem to be well except that, due to her

condition, she was not progressing that well at school. This is when the bullying first started. This was instigated by one girl in particular, and her parents had full knowledge of this.

I have to say, the school principal did do his best to create a better environment, but unfortunately, not a lot changed. When some of the parents became aware of their children's involvement, they did come to the house with their child to apologise for their behaviour. But the girl who instigated it never showed up.

The bullying, however, continued when Michelle entered high school and, sadly, when we approached the staff, they were not particularly interested. After moving to Brisbane, Michelle visited a different neurologist to find out that all this time she had been on the wrong medication. Unfortunately, the damage had already been done and took years to overcome.

Her mother and I made the mistake of enrolling Michelle in an all-girls school. It was soon discovered by others that Michelle was a soft target, so it was a huge relief when she graduated. I went to the ceremony and was asked, "You must be proud of your daughter." I put my arm around Michelle's shoulders, but could not say anything. However, what I should have said was, "Yes, I am proud of Michelle, but not of your school."

There were mornings when it was a great relief to me when Michelle emerged from her bedroom. She had been deeply affected by her mother's illnesses and was probably just as happy to see her mum alive as I was to see Michelle alive.

As time went by, Michelle picked up the pace and, with that, the job offers soon picked up and all was going reasonably well. This was until her mother was diagnosed with two brain tumours and was riddled with cancer – although that last bit we did not know until after her mum had passed away.

Michelle went back to work four days after she lost her mother, only to be told by her 'boss' to leave her grieving at the door and not bring it to work. Michelle had counselling, as we

all did, but things like that just seemed to send her spiralling downwards. After selling the house, Michelle and I moved into an apartment, and we grew closer.

When Michelle first decided to write her and her mother's story, I have to admit I was a bit sceptical. I have since, however, changed my mind as she has become a totally different person, and it is great to see that she is getting on top of things.

Michelle has become a confident and self-assured young woman, and I couldn't be prouder.



John Heynen



Contents

Preface.....	xiii
<i>Freedom</i>	<i>xvii</i>
Introduction.....	1
Part One: Celebrating Sandra.....	5
Chapter 1: Introducing Sandra.....	7
Chapter 2: A Date with Destiny.....	15
<i>An Act of Destiny</i>	25
Chapter 3: Happily Ever After	27
<i>Through the Eyes of Love</i>	35
Chapter 4: The Sandra Trials.....	37
<i>You Will Never See Me Fail</i>	57
Chapter 5: Obstacles and Opportunities	59
<i>Stand</i>	69
Chapter 6: Mother Daughter Love.....	71
<i>My True Heart and Soul</i>	79
Part Two: Facing the Immensity	81
Chapter 7: The Unthinkable	83
<i>The Unexpected</i>	89
Chapter 8: Treatment and Operations.....	91
<i>My Heart</i>	103

Chapter 9: The Loss of an Angel	105
<i>Strong</i>	111
Chapter 10: Shades of Grief and Depression	113
<i>Feeling Adrift</i>	125
Chapter 11: Friendships Lost and Found	127
<i>At Your Side and in Your Corner</i>	133
Chapter 12: Lessons Learnt.....	135
<i>Forever in My Heart</i>	143
Part Three: The Making of Michelle	145
Chapter 13: Life Unexpected	147
<i>Never Give Up</i>	155
Chapter 14: A Soul Awakening	157
<i>Thank You Letter to Mum</i>	163
Chapter 15: The Power Within All of Us	167
Conclusion.....	173
Acknowledgements.....	189
About the Author	191



Preface

*“Life is not a problem to be solved but
a reality to be experienced.”*

Unknown

What I am most proud of when I think about how *Reflections of Sandra* came to life is that it brings a smile to my face, as it was inspired by one of the most inspirational people I have ever known – my beautiful mother Sandra. It also came to life as a result of my own inner struggle to find the meaning in my mother’s death, the search for who I was without her, and what purpose I served in the world.

As you will soon discover in the beginning chapters of this book, my mother, Sandra, was a truly remarkable woman who, even when the odds were stacked against her, won many battles in life. She struggled with various health issues all the way from her early 20s until the day she died at the age of 67, when she finally let go and found a deep sense of peace. She was a true inspiration to me, my sister and the rest of my family. She showed us what it was like to be brave and have true courage and strength, even in the toughest of situations, and that there is always a light at the end of the tunnel.

The journey I embarked on after losing her at the end of February of 2012, and the immense guilt and loss I felt at the

time, was a battle I never saw coming, nor the journey to find my true self and purpose.

In the early days of losing my mother, I faced an incredible uphill battle about why I still existed without her. I wondered what my purpose was now that she was no longer here. I can still remember the intense, all-consuming feelings of complete emptiness and despair about who I was and how my life was nothing without her.

I didn't know who I was anymore without her, and I didn't know how I could possibly move forward with my life if she was not beside me. The guilt I felt about still being alive when she wasn't, and not being able to save her, was soul crushing. I could not see the point to anything, really, as she had been such a massive influence on me and my life. I found myself struggling to know what the right thing was anymore. She was my greatest role model.

I found that, because of my profound grief and depression, not only did I change, but so did my relationships with people. No one knew or wanted to deal with me. I just seemed too difficult for them to understand, and it was easier for them to pretend that I didn't exist. As a result, I became very shut down to life and put up a steel wall around myself and my heart to protect me from any further hurt.

Looking back today and knowing what I know now, I have a strong sense of purpose and a better sense of self. As you will soon read, I learnt that my mother was always teaching me and guiding me to the direction of my true path and purpose, and opening my true love of supporting and coaching people. My true calling is to help and guide people through their own struggles, to find the light at the end of the tunnel, and come to their own light-bulb moment of what their own purpose is. When I see this moment in people, when they finally awaken to why they exist, it is a true gift.

Through my journey, I have discovered that I am more like my mum than I had ever fully realised, and that no matter how

hard life wants to kick my butt, I keep going. I get right back up again because this is the best way I can honour her and her memory.

Reflections of Sandra is a book that is a complete labour of love. A tribute to the most amazing and inspirational people this world has ever seen. It is also my heart laid out on a platter.

It tells a very honest, no-holds-barred story of loss and heartbreak – of coming back from the brink to discover the true meaning of life and how it is meant to be lived.

I wrote this book to help and inspire people, through my journey, and show them that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. I also want to illustrate that whether you have depression or are just going through it, there is nothing to be ashamed of. It is just part of life's stepping stones in making us stronger. I wrote this book for all the mothers and daughters of the world to remind and show you just how special and unique that bond truly is.

This book is for people everywhere who are going through difficulty. I want it to help them find the meaning and purpose in their lives and to inspire them to keep moving forward. I want to help people find the courage that lies within them to follow their inner calling and live a truly fulfilled and inspired life. This book is to show people that each of us is truly magnificent and we each serve a purpose here on earth. We just have to find the key to unlock the door to our own unique purpose.

With love,

Michelle Heynen



Freedom

He saw my mum getting tired and a cure was not to be.

He wrapped his arms around my mum
and gently said, "Come with me."

Mum suffered much in silence, but
her spirit could never be bent.

Mum faced her pain with courage, up until the very end.

Mum fought hard to stay with us;
her fight was not in vain.

As He took her to His loving home,
and freed her from her pain.

Michelle Heynen



Introduction

My name is Michelle, and this is a true and personal story of my amazing mother, Sandra, who passed away from cancer in the beginning of 2012. It is also my story, journey and struggle dealing with her death and the amazing blessings I found within the darkness.

My mother's light was like a flashlight guiding me through life and lighting the way through life's many ups and downs. To show me that with every cloud, there is always a silver lining. Losing her, and the journey I took, was so unexpected. Over the past three years, I have gone from total heartbreak and total devastation to feeling complete love and gratitude in my heart for my mother's gift in dying. There was no greater lesson for me to learn in life than this, as this has put me on the path of my true destiny and purpose.

I had the unique and heart-opening experience of seeing past myself and my grief to what my mother's death truly meant. This transformation would change the course of my life forever in ways I never thought possible. I will share more about this amazing experience in the later chapters of this book.

I would also simply like to just pay tribute to my mother. To honour her. She is the woman who shaped my entire life, who *gave* me life and unconditional love. She taught me some valuable lessons including compassion, empathy, humility and a unique ability to put myself in other people's shoes. She was

also the one who taught me to step up to the plate and help those people less fortunate than myself.

My mother's story is one of courage and strength. One of hope and not giving up, even when you have had enough. It is a story of inspiration and love – not just for her family, but also for others. Through her unconditional faith, she knew there was a purpose for her journey.

My mother was an incredibly brave woman. She faced a lot of challenges in her life, more than a lot of people should have to go through in one lifetime. Yet through all of it, she never gave up and somehow found peace with it all.

She saw the best in people even when they didn't deserve it. She never had a bad word to say about anyone. She had this amazing faith, even in the darkest of moments, which was a true inspiration to watch and be a part of.

Throughout my life, I had always felt, deep down, that there was something more that I should be doing. I was always drawn to help people in any way I could. It did not matter to me what it was. I found joy in the art of being able to make someone else happy. I discovered through writing this book that my true gift and joy in life is to be able to help and inspire people. For me, there is nothing else that drives me more to get up in the morning than being able to get up and serve people.

One thing is for certain, I am a better person for having her as my mother and teacher. There was no one better as a living example of what a parent should be, and, in my eyes, there still is no one better. I will always be eternally grateful to her for making me the woman I am today, and hope that, wherever she is, she is proud of me.

Losing a parent can be one of the hardest – if not the hardest – things you will ever experience in life. The loss can leave you completely paralysed and not knowing which way is up. That is what I let it do to me, as I did not know there was another way to be. The love a parent has for their child is one of the most unconditional loves we are ever likely to experience. I used to think that I would

never get over the loss of my mother and that I would always feel broken. I discovered, however, that this is not the case, and if you take a leap of faith and open your mind up, you can move past the sadness and feel love and gratitude in your heart.

When I first began my journey through my mother's death, I did not really understand it, nor did I think that there were any blessings to be found in the experience. Initially, I felt that death was both a heartbreak and heartache that no one would ever be able to heal. I thought my grief would never end, and I would always be sad, but I would somehow find a way to live my life around the grief. I went through what society tells us are the main steps of the grieving process, such as acceptance, anger and so on.

Reflections of Sandra is divided into three parts, each telling its own story and coming together in the end. The first part of the book is telling the story of my mother, Sandra, and how she met my dad and their life together. The second part of my book is the story of my journey dealing with my mother's illness and, ultimately, her death. It is my story of going through the paralysing grief that made me feel like I could not go. Finally, the third part is the story of how I came back from the brink and found the hidden blessings in my mother's death, which led me to discover my true purpose in life and become the tower of strength that people need in the world.

My hope for each one of you who reads this book is that you can be inspired by my story and find the hope and courage you need so you, too, can find that light that will guide you to your true purpose in life. To make you believe that through every dark moment, there is an incredible lesson to be learnt and benefited from, and that each and every one of us is an infinite and beautiful creature just waiting to be unleashed on the world with our unique gifts to share.

Part One

Celebrating Sandra



2nd January 1945 – 28th February 2012



Chapter 1

Introducing Sandra

*"In the end, it's not the years in your life
that count. It's the life in your years."*

Abraham Lincoln

Sandra was born in the small but famous town of Goondiwindi on the 2nd of January 1945. She was the third child and only girl of Jim and Freda McCall. This was, unfortunately, not the best time to come into the world as World War II was nearing its end.

Things were hard and money was tight in the McCall household. Sandra's father, Jim, was a shearer and her mother, Freda, cooked for the shearers as well as for some of the hotels, and later at the local hospital. They did their best, though, with what they had to ensure their children were taken care of.

Sandra continued to grow up in Goondiwindi and attended the local primary school called St. Mary's Catholic School until year 8. During that time this was as far as one could advance in school, unless your parents could afford to send you to a boarding school in Toowoomba or Brisbane.

In her school days, my mother really excelled at athletics,

often winning several trophies. She was much like myself and very good at office studies as well. My mother really enjoyed school and, at the end of year 8, she applied for, and was subsequently offered, an office clerk position at Watson's Garage.

*

Sandra was excited by this as it was her first full-time job, and her first time earning her own money, which allowed her to start planning her future and what she wanted to do. This job was performed during the day, and in the evening, she worked at the local picture show, which was owned by the same family.

She loved working at both the garage and the picture show; she loved the challenge each job brought and the interaction with the customers. She loved meeting new people. She was never a shy person, much like me, and would talk to anyone.

This just made her excel at her job at both the garage and the picture theatre. People loved her, as she was always so friendly and easy to talk to. She had a gentle presence about her that drew people to her.

Sandra was one in a million. There was no one like her, and there never will be anyone like her. She was a true inspiration, not just to me and my family, but to everyone that knew her and ever met her.

*

She loved her craft and keeping her hands busy and active. In the early years, she was always sewing amazing dresses, shirts and pants for my sister and me. She would mostly follow a pattern, but they always had her little touches, which was nice. She also made us the odd costume for parties and such. She once made my sister a cute little Dutch girl outfit, and she made me a very cute clown outfit, for which we both won first prizes in a best costume contest.

Sandra also loved to knit and crochet scarfs, slippers, and blankets, and she would make beautiful handkerchiefs. I still have some of them in a box in my room. These are things I will keep forever and pass onto to my beautiful niece, Emma, someday.

My mother was an avid reader. She loved books and reading; you could always find her with her nose in a book. She loved crime books. Harry Potter and Maeve Binchy books were her favourites. It was because of this that I lined up for two hours so I could get the latest book signed by the author for her birthday. I remember her face when she opened the book and the delight when she read the personal message from the author. I think, looking back, that maybe this is from where my underlying passion for books and learning comes.

*

My mother had an amazing collection of books in a variety of genres including crime, mystery, and true stories spread all over the house. She was always up for reading something different to stretch herself and try something new to see if she liked it. I would always find her on the couch in the living room with her face in a book. I now hold a great deal of her collection in my home office. They are things I will always treasure as they were a part of her and who she was.

Sandra loved going to the movies on occasion. However, we rarely went together since, as has been said on more than one occasion, my taste was rubbish. She loved films like *A Beautiful Mind* and the *Marigold Hotel* – that sort of thing.

She used to say I just liked to watch rubbish, didn't appreciate a good movie, and would not know a good movie if it bit me in the face. If there was something really special on that I knew that she would like, I would send her and Dad to go watch it in Gold Glass so she could totally relax. Sandra was also a big kid at heart and would giggle like a naughty school

girl when she did the unexpected – like let out a ripper of a burp. You see, she couldn't usually do them so when she did, it seemed to give her joy and make her laugh, and the rest of us would laugh with her.

It was also a rarity for her to swear and, whenever she did something like that, she always looked like a guilty school child or something.

*

As you will learn, Sandra loved to travel and explore new and exciting places. Whenever possible, she was on a plane to somewhere. She never let her health struggles get in the way of travel. She always gave everything a go. She even climbed up the stairs of the Sacre-Couer in Paris, which was amazing – she had the heart of a lion.

My absolute favourite memories, though, would have to be those in which we travelled together along with my dad. Whether it was a trip across to New Zealand or on a European Adventure on a tour, we always had the best time, as we were together.

Sandra loved her family and would have done anything to protect us. She was always there if we needed her, no matter what it was. I will always remember and be grateful for the many times she stayed up with me in an emergency room until I was either admitted or discharged. She would always be back first thing at 9 am to see how I was, would come back a couple of times during the day, and again once at night.

Two of the greatest joys in life for her were her two grandchildren: Thomas, who was born on the 3rd of August 2006; and Emma, who was born two years later on the 12th of December 2008. Mum loved and adored those two kids. They were her babies, and they loved her and lovingly referred to her as "Oma." I can remember her face and her voice when each of them was born.

*

She loved spoiling them both rotten and was always looking at things to buy them. When they were first born, she got so much enjoyment out of looking at baby clothing for them. Whenever she could, she would help out, babysit and offer advice where she could to help my sister and her husband Cameron. I know my sister loved and appreciated this, and that it is one of the many things she misses now that Mum is not here with us.

I loved watching Mum interact with them. It was always such an amazing thing to witness, as there was so much love there. They adored her so much and always wanted to be around her. She was so good with them, and they always listened to her and what she had to say.

One of her fears about leaving this Earth was that Thomas and Emma would forget her. This is impossible, as we all remind them every day who she was and how much she loved them. Not only that, but they talk about her, too, and ask questions about her, which is nice. It makes me smile when they do, as it means she made an impact on them – even in the short time she got to spend with them.

Sandra's love for others knew no bounds. No matter who you were or what you had done, she was always so loving and compassionate, and made time for everyone. She amazed me with her capacity to love and be loved.

*

If someone needed something, it did not matter what it was, Sandra would always make the time to be there and help. If it was advice over a cup of coffee, she would be there. If you were sick and needed help, she would be there. Sandra had a heart of gold.

Sandra was the best type of parent and role model you could ever want as a child – at least in my eyes. She showed me

how to live life despite all the challenges she had to face in life. She was a truly inspirational person. She faced every struggle head-on with true courage and conviction. She would not give up and she would come through it in the end.

Sandra was amazingly fearless. If she had fear, she certainly did not show it. Sandra never once showed us that she was scared in any way, shape or form, or that the struggles were getting her down. She was incredibly courageous and strong. She showed us the true meaning of what it was to be strong. The meaning of standing tall in the face of adversity.

She had true strength of character. She never had a bad word to say about anyone no matter who they were or what they did. She had the biggest heart for everyone she came into contact with, which always amazed and impressed me. She very rarely put herself first. Instead, she was always thinking of us or her friends and what she could do for others.

*

Even in her darkest days – towards the end – instead of resting, she would take her daily rounds at the hospital and see what she could do to help the other patients and their families. That was who Sandra was. If we couldn't find her in her room, we always could find her walking around the floor somewhere connecting with people. At first glance, I think people thought she was a nun because she was so gentle and caring.

Sandra had this amazing sense of faith in absolutely everything, and trusted that there was a greater plan for her than what she had on Earth. She thought that every struggle and fight she faced here on Planet Earth would come with a greater reward in heaven, which was a truly inspiring and beautiful way to look at it.

Sandra was a complete force of nature – someone not to be messed with. She rose above any challenge that she faced in life, no matter how big or how small. Sandra always did her

best in life, no matter what hand was dealt to her. Through that, she somehow managed to discover the miracles that life had to offer.

Along with this strong force of nature also came an extreme stubborn streak – much like me. She wouldn't let anyone do anything for her, even when she was at her worst, because she did not want to be classified as – or be seen as – useless or crippled. If possible, and if she could, she always wanted to do everything herself. This particular trait drove everyone in the family a bit crazy. We just wanted to help her, but she was always determined to do everything herself. I actually think this particular gem of a trait is something I have in me.

*

Sandra was also my teacher. She taught me that everything in life is very much like a quote from Maya Angelou: “Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.” No matter how challenging those moments were, Sandra's true courage and spirit were the reasons that her life expanded beyond anything I could have ever possibly imagined.

Sandra taught me that God didn't send her anything she couldn't handle as she kicked life's little challenges left, right and centre. I just wish that God had not trusted her so much. She taught me to forget and not regret, otherwise life is yours to miss.

A lot of people in life are afraid to say what they want. Not Sandra. She was never scared to share her true thoughts and feelings on anything. Even if you didn't want to hear it, she would tell you because it was always for your benefit.

Sandra was someone you could rely on for the truth, even if you did not want to hear it. She said it because she knew it was something you needed to hear. Like someone else I now know, she challenged you to make yourself better – to push yourself beyond your comfort zone.

*

Sandra was a nurturer. It did not matter what it was, whether it was helping us with our homework or teaching us to drive, she was always willing to put us and our needs before what she wanted. She was the best mother anyone could possibly ask for. Sandra was not only a mother, she was our best friend in the best sense of the word – not just for us, but for anyone that needed it.

Sandra was a role model for anyone who faced a challenge in life, and showed everyone what it was like to live a full life despite these challenges. She rarely complained about anything. She always chose to look on the bright side and to what she could do instead of what she couldn't.

She was like I am now – fiercely independent while having a strong sense of community and family – and did whatever it took to defend and protect us. In my opinion, everyone needs to know someone like Sandra; their lives will never be the same. Everyone who knew my mother loved her and enjoyed what she brought to their lives.

To put it simply, Sandra was the perfect name for my mother as it is a strong name for an extremely strong woman. She was born under the sign of Aries, so she was intelligent, witty, very open, honest and passionate. Sandra did whatever it took to uphold her morals and ethics and ensured that we did as well. If you did the right thing by her, she went out of her way to make your life beautiful.



Chapter 2

A Date with Destiny

“Sometimes the heart sees what is invisible to the eye.”

H Jackson Brown Jr

This is the story of how my parents’ amazing love story began, and how my dad decided to come to Australia to ultimately meet the love of his life – my mother Sandra.

Dad never had any intention whatsoever of moving to Australia. This was despite the fact that his two older brothers, Bill and Paul, were living there. The eldest brother had been living in Australia since 1950. Dad was seemingly happy with his life in Holland.

My father had this theory that he was doing just fine. He thought that he had everything in life he could want right there in Holland. This was until his girlfriend at the time broke his heart and threw a massive spanner in my dad’s plan. From what Dad has told me, he thought he had met the one he was going to marry. He thought he would spend the rest of his life with this girl and that everything was perfectly fine. He was content with the way things were and did not see a reason to change anything.

But after his girlfriend broke up with him, he was faced

with some uncertainty about his life and what he had thought it was going to be. He had to come up with a Plan B, if you like, and really think about what it was he wanted.

*

So one cold day, while he was scanning the paper, he was excited to come across an advertisement. This advertisement was trying to entice young people to experience what life was like in Australia for two years. Well, this article certainly did its job because it got my dad thinking it was time for a change – to see what else was out there in the big wide world. He felt that now was the time to change and shake things up a bit. My dad was ready to go out and see what else the world had to offer, and he was excited to see what adventures lay ahead of him.

So as fate would have it, my father's sister, Anne, had also seen the same advertisement and wanted to go as well. However, she had a different destination in mind than what my father did. She wanted to go and live her life in Melbourne, and my dad wanted to go and explore what Adelaide had to offer.

My father was very happy in Adelaide and had started to build a life for himself. However, his brother, Paul, who had been living in Sydney at the time, did not share the same thoughts. He was not impressed with the idea that all of his brothers and sisters were not together. Paul thought that the family should be all together, in one place, so they could look after each other and support each other. Instead, everyone was spread across four states of Australia, with the oldest brother, Bill, in Goondiwindi.

Although the Immigration Department was not happy with the idea, as this meant they were breaking their original contract to come to Australia, they could not stop all of them from moving to Goondiwindi. However, this did not happen right away. My dad had decided to leave Australia, and his