

Deception

Angelo Mifsud

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Deception

DEDICATION

To my family and friends who supported and encouraged me with much patience in writing this novel.

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CHAPTER ONE

Mary Jamieson watched Nicholas Kenby go up the stairs from outside the living room door. Once he was out of sight she darted back inside. She rushed to the desk and pulled it away from the wall and removed three hard covered books from the secret compartment at the back. The account books listed all her high profile clients; politicians, businesspeople and police. Names she will use later.

She carried them upstairs to her bedroom and placed them in her overnight bag. She did a jig around the room, Mary's room, the woman whose identity she took, and used it so well that no one ever questioned who she was. She sat in front of the dressing-table mirror and saw her success. She had tricked them all; David Kenby, Mary Jamieson, and all those other fools in the import company, and even David's son Nicholas. But he never knew his father or his Aunt Mary anyway.

She removed the grey wig, and revealed a mass of matted honey blonde hair beneath a hairnet. She'd let it grow now, down to her shoulders, she thought. She smeared Pond's vanishing cream over her face to remove the thick makeup, the false chin, which left a red ring in its place. She hummed as she cleaned around her mouth, eyes, and cheeks, and then looked into the mirror to the woman in her late thirties.

'Goodbye Mary Jamieson and, hello Susan Burchett!' She whispered and threw her hands up in the air.

Off came the scarf and Mary's nineteen forties dress, which luckily fitted, and stood in front in the mirror. She touched the now visible tattoo, the Butterfly, on the lower left side of her neck. It was done on the spur of an emotional moment when her first love died in a motorbike accident. She was fifteen at the time, his bike slid under a truck and he died in an instant. She remembered the hurt. The tattoo was something to take the heartbreak away and would always remind her every time she saw it.

She removed the corset, which helped to reproduce Mary's mature and bent body. She looked at her reflection in the full length mirror, a slim and slender figure, and a new life. She folded the damp towel and

pushed it into the overnight bag with the corset.

She cleared everything from the dressing-table, the drawers and wardrobe, and stuffed them into the bag. She hung Mary's dress in the wardrobe and slipped into a black jumpsuit, a black scarf and black sandshoes, and a black beret. Everything in the room she carefully wiped clean with a hand towel. Nothing was to be out of place, she thought. She put on a heavy black overcoat, picked up the overnight bag, and quietly made her way to the stairs.

She hesitated at Nick's door, and in defiance, blew him a terse kiss. She crept down the stairs and out the back door, as the hall clock chimed a quarter to midnight.

She sidestepped rats that ran out from under the house and hurried down the garden path to the back gate. The vermin had infested the house after they buried the body many months ago.

She reached the gate and opened it just enough to squeeze through without it scraping on the concrete path. She glanced back at the house and then descended the steep narrow stairs. She hurried along Dillon Lane keeping to the shadows and against the wall till she reached the corner. There she saw, huddled under a tree, the two newspapermen who caused the brawl earlier.

She darted across the street to the park and hurried along the winding path, around the massive fig trees, and the children's playground as she had done many times before. She stepped out on to Stephen Street, a dead end, and headed for the block of flats. She ran inside the building and into the small foyer, up the stairs to the top floor, and pushed the key into the lock of flat 4.

'Ello Miss Susan! You late tonight.' Franco Yankovitich yelled as he came out of flat 3.

Shocked she turned to see him with a large brown paper bag, which he held away from him. 'You have garbage I take down for you Missy?'

'No thanks Mister Yankovitich. I have to go, see you tomorrow, good night,' she hurried inside and closed the door. She placed the overnight bag on the small table, and then poured herself a gin and tonic. She stood on the balcony and looked out into the dim light for any strangers that may be lurking in the shadows. A metal sound rang out beneath her. Must be Yankovitich at the metal garbage bin,

she thought, and went back inside.

I have to get out of the country, she thought, as she sat down on her second-hand sofa. She sipped her drink and from the pile of British Airways travel brochures on the coffee-table, picked up a European brochure.

She browsed through each page and marked a cross on the top of the page of destinations she liked. There was so little time, but she had to decide and arrange her travel plans tomorrow.

Now relaxed, she glanced round the room and those special moments she spent in this two bedroom flat. She rented it after David Kenby died. It was her private place, a place where she could be herself, instead of Mary's carer and companion.

When Mary died, with Susan's help, a short time after David, it was then Susan realised the opportunity to take Mary's place as the head of David's business. It was a stroke of genius, no one had seen or heard from Mary for years. She was a recluse after she contracted polio and confined to a wheelchair. But Mary, because of her vanity, had shunned the world.

Susan took over the business, a drug import syndicate, which Mary and David, and their silent partner Brian Goldsmith controlled. It was a risk but Susan, disguised as Mary, fooled even Goldsmith, who hadn't seen Mary for a decade, and the business grew under her control.

Susan and her half-brother Simon buried Mary with the family records and photographs under the kitchen floor. But a week ago, Nicholas Kenby, David's son, came and as expected wanted his inheritance and take over the business. She couldn't let him just walk in and take what she built so she had Ken Featherby get rid of him when he got off the train. But Featherby and his goons failed, so now she'll take his inheritance from him.

She continued to flick through the brochure on her lap, disheartened, she went back to the first marked page. Zurich, now there's a nice place, she thought. Would Simon like her choice?

She checked the flight and time schedules and chose the one she wanted. It was now late and she would have to finish it all tomorrow; open a Zurich Bank account and transfer the Kenby fortune, and then book the airline tickets to leave as soon as possible. She would arrange

for Simon to follow her a day or two later so not to draw attention to their relationship. She checked the passports were in order, and exhausted she went to bed.

Susan woke early and listened to the news, time was of the essence, and had carry out her plan before she was missed. The news reader only mentioned, that Navy Divers were searching for the crashed Trans Australian Airways flight 538 off Mackay in Queensland, a young police officer was killed in a road accident and, the death of Brian Goldsmith last Saturday, which police considered suspicious. A fine day expected with a frost tonight.

She laid out her clothes on the bed; a smart white blouse, a royal blue winter skirt and coat, and matching black patent high heel shoes.

She dabbed on an expensive perfume. She knew the bank manager, and with a little woman's know-how, he'll do whatever she asked.

Lastly, she wrapped the white silk scarf around her neck to cover the tattoo. She put on the dark overcoat, her hat, pushed forward and to the side, to intensify her new alluring look. A quick check in the mirror and with her black purse she was ready.

She made her way through the park and out where she crossed the night before. The sun's rays were warm in the crisp morning air as she hurried up to Oxford Street.

She saw the Mercedes swing out of Dillon Street. It was heading towards her. She lowered her head, eyes down and walked briskly ahead, and through the corner of her eye she saw them; Sam, her driver, and the Kenby boy beside him. She continued at the same pace with fingers crossed inside her pockets. To her relief it passed slowly by and drove on. She continued walking and then slowly turned to see the Mercedes drive out of sight.

She went through the grounds of the Royal Hospital for Women, a detour she often used that brought her out at the bank. She joined a queue waiting outside, it wasn't open. Why wasn't it open?

She readied herself to run if challenged, took a deep breath and waited behind a large woman in a fur coat and hat. Susan would every Wednesday remove the Jamieson disguise and as Mary

Jamieson would go to the bank. No one in bank had known the real Mary Jamieson, so her deception was planned for this very day.

'Anyone would think we had all day!' The woman shouted and pushed forward in the queue with Susan shuffling behind her. 'It's cool this morning isn't it love?' The woman turned calmly to Susan, who just smiled. 'Come on in there! We don't have all day!' The woman shouted aggressively and banged on the door with her fist and much to the embarrassment of three men who stood near. 'It's all right for you.' She barked out at them. 'You might have nothing to do other than stand here, but I've things to do. Look! There they are sitting on their backsides.' She thundered, but no sooner had the words come out of her mouth the bank doors opened. She grabbed Susan's hand and pushed her way through. 'We're first,' she screamed and pushed past the young man opening the doors.

Once inside she let go of Susan's hand and headed for the teller. Susan casually made her way to the enquiry counter.

'Good morning Miss Jamieson,' said the young teller who had opened the bank and as it happened normally served her as Mary on those Wednesday afternoons.

'What can I do for you today?'

'Good morning,' She replied. 'And it's so nice to be remembered, thank you - can I see Mister Hamel please? I don't have an appointment and, it's rather urgent.'

'Just a moment and I'll see if he can see you.' He answered and then hurried off. 'This way Miss,' he returned and pointed to the end of the counter. 'Mister Hamel will see you now.'

She followed him to Hamel's office, a path she knew too well. But today she was conscious of what was at stake.

'Good Morning Miss Jamieson.' Hamel welcomed her into his office. 'Please take a seat,' he pointed to the chair in front of his desk. She sat down. He sat back and placed his hands on his abdomen and twiddled his thumbs.

Bernard Hamel, single and middle-aged. He was of medium height, slim, with a receding hairline, which was mostly grey and sparse. He stared at her with beady eyes and a lecherous smile.

Susan disliked the crude and hideous man. She didn't trust him, but he was the one person who she wanted on her side, especially today.

'Now, what can we do for you?' He asked with a repulsive smile.

‘Last time we spoke I raised the question of moving the business to Europe.’ She recalled and let her fingers rub nervously along the desk’s edge. He watched her intently as her hand slid back and forth. ‘You offered assistance to open a Swiss bank account and transfer money into that account.’ She now fiddled with her hair. ‘Can you help with that?’ She asked seductively. He stood up to the cabinet behind him and pulled out a file, sat back in his chair, opened the file on the desk, and then turned the first few pages.

‘Ah yes!’ He answered happily. ‘We made preliminary enquiries and found Mister Kenby had opened an account in Zurich some time ago.’ He turned the file round, and pushed it to her. ‘You didn’t know?’ He interrogated as she shook her head. ‘Strange he didn’t mention it as he arranged it before he passed away and before my time as bank manager.’

Susan saw her plans crumble before her eyes if she didn’t explain. Slow down, think girl think, she thought, as she fastened on to his gaze. ‘Oh dear, I must apologise. David did mention it a long time ago and, with all that’s happened I forgot all about it.’ She undid the top two buttons of her blouse, with the desired effect. His eyes focused on her chest. It was enough to take his mind off his question. ‘I don’t remember him doing anything about it.’ She grinned. ‘And since I hadn’t received any correspondence of the account, I presumed he forgot about it. Is there a balance?’

‘I understand,’ he replied, his eyes still focused on her opened blouse. ‘I’m surprised your accountant didn’t tell you, but all that matters now is we’ll take care of it.’ He fumbled with the file and awkwardly lifted the page and placed it down before her. ‘We requested a balance from the Zurich Cantonal Bank.’ He lent over, his hand trembled as he pointed to the bottom of the page. ‘This statement came on Friday and is your copy.’

‘Thank you, I appreciate this. We’ve had a substantial increase in business costs over the year. David felt Europe was our best option.’ She responded, and glanced at the amount. ‘Sorry for the inconvenience.’ She controlled her excitement and placed the document on her lap.

‘It creates a lot of unnecessary work when a client neglects to advise us of their business intentions.’ He admonished her and closed the file.

‘Thirty two thousand five hundred Swiss francs,’ she said aloud,

‘How much is that in Australian pounds?’

‘On the current exchange rate, about ten thousand pounds not including interest.’ He answered.

‘Well it’s a start.’ She replied sheepishly. ‘I’m off to Zurich to organise our move so I want to transfer funds to Zurich as soon as possible.’ She announced. ‘What is the current balance in the company account?’

‘Current available balance is four hundred and twenty thousand pounds, less outstanding debts, which are in the vicinity of ten thousand pounds.... how much do you want to transfer?’ His pen hovered over the page. ‘Please remember there may be new expenses.’

‘Transfer four hundred thousand pounds, the remaining twenty thousand will cover any new expenses. I’ll advise our manager today.’

‘The transfer will take a day or so.’

‘As I wasn’t involved in setting up the Swiss account, how will I access the money?’ She queried.

‘We’ve advised the bank of Mister Kenby’s passing.’ He turned a couple of pages. ‘We sent them a copy of the death certificate, which they accepted, so all I need is your signature on this form.’ He confirmed and handed it to her. ‘We’ll give you a letter of introduction with your signature to take with you.’ He handed her the pen. She signed it. But could she change the name later, she wondered.

He checked the signature and signed it, then stamped it. ‘I’m a Justice of the Peace and have verified your signature.’ He slipped it in the envelope and sealed it before handing it to her. He completed a separate withdrawal form, which she signed. He glanced at the time and was frustrated at how long it had taken as he took the signed form from her.

‘How long will it take?’ She asked.

‘We’ll send the transfer off today but it’ll be Thursday or Friday before it’s approved in Zurich.’ He placed the file in his out-tray as she stood and wrapped the coat tightly around her. ‘Will I charge the transfer fee to the business account?’

‘Fee, what fee?’ She retorted.

‘Miss Jamieson, the time and resources required to execute this transfer are considerable. A moderate fee is charged for this service.’ he insisted, and was annoyed as he guided her to the door.

‘Of course, how stupid of me.’ She chuckled and then hesitated. ‘I expect to be in Zurich by Thursday, so I’d like to get traveller’s

cheques.'

'Yes, how much did you want?' He mumbled.

'Could I have five thousand US dollars?'

'I'll check if we have such a large amount. Excuse me.' He left her pacing the floor nervously.

'Yes, we have five thousand in traveller's cheques in US currency.' He said and placed five books on the desk. 'I assume this also will be deducted from the business account?' He handed her another completed withdrawal slip to sign. 'Is there anything else Miss Jamieson?' He pressed standing by the door and looked frantically at the time. She put the cheques in her handbag.

'No, thank you, you've been most helpful.'

'My pleasure Miss.' He replied. 'Have a safe journey. Please call me if you need further assistance.' He said as she left. He closed the door and went to the phone on the desk and dialled.

'She's just left. The money is to be transferred today to the Zurich Cantonal Bank.' He put the receiver down and sat at his desk.

Susan, had spent far too long in the bank, she caught the bus to the city. Time was short, and with the money transferred, she urgently needed to book the airline tickets. At the city town hall, and as she headed for the airline office, she caught a glimpse of the newspaper headline in the newspaper stall. There on the front page was a photograph of Nicholas Kenby and Sam her driver, in the front of the Mercedes. She was in the back seat, her face and tattoo were a blur. Instinctively she touched the side of her neck, the tattoo, she thought. She grabbed a copy of the newspaper with the headline; 'A Killer On The Loose' in large bold print. It alleged Nicholas Kenby was the murderer of two people and with the copy under her arm, she entered the airline office.

'Good morning?' A woman said as Susan walked in.

'Yes good morning - I'd like to book two tickets to Zurich please.'

'Yes of course, please take a seat,' the woman said and bade Susan to follow her to a desk.

'It's urgent, I must leave today, an uncle has passed away,' Susan said, dubbing her eyes with her handkerchief.

'I am sorry,' the woman answered as they sat down. She immediately checked for available flights.

‘Two tickets,’ Susan interrupted. ‘One for me and the other for my half-brother who’ll join me later.’ Susan impatiently listened to the woman’s opinion about illness and death as she searched through the list of flights. ‘We were warned that he didn’t have long to go, but it’s still a shock.’ Susan daintily blew into her handkerchief.

‘There’s a seat on the eleven thirty flight, but you should be at the airport now.’ She glanced at the wall clock. ‘There are two first class seats on QF 713 which leaves at one thirty today, or the nine fifteen tomorrow morning, plenty of seats there?’

‘I’ll take the one thirty flight.’ Susan pleaded and quickly filled in the details in the company chequebook. ‘Is there a seat available tomorrow for my brother?’ She queried as she wrote out the airline’s name on the cheque.

‘Yes, a first class seat I’m afraid, QF 733, which leaves at midday.’

‘Please book it.’ Susan ordered, her pen over the chequebook.

‘Will I book your accommodation as well? We have an arrangement with the Zurich Sofitel Hotel?’

‘Yes, thank you.’ Susan answered and glanced at the time, eleven o’clock, there wasn’t much time.

‘How many nights do you plan to stay?’

‘Five nights thank you.’

‘What about your return tickets, will I book return flights?’

‘No I’ll do that later. I don’t have time to think about that right now.’ She said annoyed.

‘It’s cheaper if you book return flights?’

‘Thank you, just leave it one way. How much is that?’ She enquired eagerly.

‘Nine hundred and nineteen pounds for two first class one way tickets. Payment for accommodation is your responsibility. I’ll telex them today and book a two bedroom apartment, is that all right?’ The woman said. ‘There, all done.’

Susan handed her the cheque and shoved the tickets in her handbag, and hurriedly left. She caught a taxi back to the flat to pack.

Susan jumped out of the taxi, asked the driver to wait, and raced upstairs. There was no time to waste as she grabbed the large suitcase and placed the three books in first, and then threw in her clothes and everything else she thought she’d need.

She wrote a cheque and put it in an envelope. In another envelope she shoved Simon’s tickets with three hundred dollars in travellers

cheques, his passport, and a letter she prepared last night. There was just under an hour before her flight as she locked the door and raced across to flat 3 opposite. She knocked, her luggage by her feet.

'Ello Miss Susan.' Yankovitich said opening the door. He smiled. Susan was his favourite tenant. She never complained and kept her flat clean and tidy.

'I am leaving today, now.' She said and handed him the key and the first envelope. 'Sorry for the short notice, it's an emergency. Here's six weeks rent.'

'I sorry to see you go Missy.'

'Can you leave a receipt with the boys in flat 2, they'll get it to me.' She asked and rushed off.

'Good luck Missy.' He shouted after her and opened the envelope and smiled, as Susan ran down to the taxi.

'International airport please, and hurry.' She begged as the driver placed her luggage in the boot. And to make it worth his while she handed him a ten pound note, which to him, equalled a week's wage.

At the International terminal she had enough time to check in her luggage and get her boarding pass, and then waited in the departure lounge. She hoped the police hadn't found what she was up to, else there was no escape.

'QF 713 for London now boarding. Passengers are requested to make their way to gate 2.' A voice boomed out. She nervously joined the queue while her eyes searched for the telling sign of police.

She showed her boarding pass at the gate and made her way out to the tarmac and the aircraft.

'Good afternoon.' The flight attendant said, glanced at Susan's boarding pass, and checked her off the list. 'Miss Burchett,' she noted. 'Seat A row 3, the window seat.' She said pointing to the left side of the cabin. Susan quickly sat down in her wide window seat.

'Good afternoon, Miss Burchett, I'm Felix, your steward on this flight.' The tall flight attendant interrupted her thoughts and helped her with the seat belt. She let him fuss over her and when he finished handed her an airline magazine.

'Ladies and gentlemen welcome aboard Qantas QF 713. There will be a short delay while we wait for a passenger to join the flight.'

Apologies for any inconvenience. Passengers to Zurich will change to another aircraft in Singapore. Airport staff will assist to continue your flight to Zurich.'

She dismissed her initial concern as the flow of passengers boarding slowed to a trickle. She gazed around the cabin, it was full, except the seat next to hers.

She heard voices outside the aircraft's door and a tall handsome man hurried inside. Out of breath he showed his boarding pass to the flight attendant and as she checked his name, he calmly stroked his well-groomed beard. Felix ushered him down the aisle and as she expected he stopped at her row and pointed to the aisle seat next to her.

The man smiled as he dropped heavily into the seat. Felix, to save time, helped him with the seat belt. She had to lean to the side to give him room. Felix left and she settled back as the magazine fell on to the floor.

'I'll get it for you Miss.' He insisted, undid his seat belt and leant down. 'There you go,' he said handing it back to her. 'Peter, Peter Sullivan,' he announced and hurriedly buckled up.

'Thank you I'm Susan.' She replied and reluctantly shook his extended hand.

'Hello Susan,' he whispered. 'Sorry for the hold up. I had car problems.' He claimed loudly so everyone within earshot heard him. 'And where are you off to?' He whispered.

'To Zurich.'

'Great place. Holiday?' He queried. 'That's where I'm bound for but just overnight.' He leant closer. 'And then London.'

Just then the Captain's voice came over the address system as the flight stewards took up positions along the aisle. He introduced the head steward and wished passengers a comfortable journey. The head steward now took control and sought everyone's attention as he and his team went through the safety procedures. But Susan's attention was on her neighbour, and her instinct told her to beware.

'It's only a safety precaution, nothing ever happens.' Peter whispered as the engines roared into life. Their safety talk finished, the stewards hurried to their seats at the front and rear of the aircraft as it slowly rolled forward.

She gazed out the window with fear and excitement as the aircraft rolled steadily along. It turned, stopped for a second before it surged

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forward, slowly at first, and then with a jolt sped down the runway. Faster and faster, the ground rushed by beneath them, and then with a bump it disappeared. They were airborne and she was on her way.

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