



JENNIFER BACIA

A masterpiece of
suspense, courage
and deadly secrets.

DARK SIDE OF THE HARBOUR

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JENNIFER
BACIA

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PROLOGUE

1980s

The frail figure on the bed let out a harsh, rasping breath. His exhaustion was clear. It had taken the last vestige of his energy to give voice to the words he had never before spoken to another living soul. Only now, in the last hours of his life, had Colin Foley finally found the courage to speak the truth.

With an effort he shifted his bloodshot gaze to the young woman who sat on the standard issue chair beside his hospital bed. He could see the shock etched on her pale face. The tumble of chestnut curls and intense dark eyes reminded him so much of her mother. Ellen. His precious Ellen. How he had loved her... would have done anything for her. And he had. No matter what it had cost him, no matter the burden he had carried alone for the rest of his life.

Until now.

Through his pain, he searched for some sign of understanding, of forgiveness on his daughter's face. Yet why should he expect that? How could anyone else begin to understand?

But that hadn't stopped him from hoping.

'Do you see, Sarah? Do you understand why I did it? The guilt has eaten at me all these years. But I did it for your mum... it was for Ellen. I was at their mercy. I had no option.' To speak was a struggle with the demon that had his lungs in a vice-like grip.

Sarah Foley stared down at the grey, sagging face of her dying father. The father she had always respected, thought so highly of. An honourable man. A man who had spent his life defending right from wrong, helping to form her own moral compass. He had been her inspiration, so much part of the reason she had chosen the path she had. The path where truth was more important than anything else.

She licked her dry lips as she recognised the tortured plea in her father's eyes. He had made his confession and now his desperate need for absolution was painfully clear.

For a moment she felt a sharp flash of overpowering anger. How dare he do this to her... How dare he pass on the burden of his unforgivable sin?

But then, as swiftly as it had come, her anger died away. Who was she to sit in judgement? How can any of us know how we will react when faced with the worst kind of decision?

Reaching out, she laid her hand on the wasted, knotted one that lay limply on the tight hospital sheet.

'Sometimes Dad, we do bad things for good reasons.'

Simplistic words. As if she were talking to a child. 'You couldn't have known how things would have turned out. No one could blame you for that.'

But they could, she knew. And the price in the end would have had to be paid. And now her father's sin was his dying legacy—to reveal or keep buried as a test of her own character.

Two hours later they called with the news that Colin Foley was dead.

ONE

1980s

Everyone on the Peninsula knew when Ray Reardon had arrived for the summer. Even among the well-heeled locals, his gold Bentley turbo could turn heads as it headed along the coast road to his impressive Palm Beach retreat.

And after all these years, Ray still got a kick out of making an impact. He was proud of his success. It hadn't come as any surprise. Right from a kid, his goal had been to make money. Lots of it. What had surprised him was the way he'd achieved it. Who'd have thought sitting in front of a microphone spouting his opinions to the world, or at least, Australia, would have been his path to riches? And power. That had been another surprise. But when you commanded a radio audience as large as his, when you topped every ratings battle, it made you a force to be reckoned with.

Advertisers knocked each other over for the chance to back his hour-long daily talkback program, and there were plenty of others also lined up to seek his influence. Every manager

handling a client with a book, album, film or anything else to promote, made sure Ray Reardon was their first port of call.

Ray saw himself as both entertainer and businessman, someone who could flog pretty much anything to his devoted audience. It was for that reason the political class also clamoured to get on his show. They knew the value of a “little chat” with Ray Reardon when they wanted to reach the wider Australian voting public. Not that Ray wasn’t above the odd provocative question. There was both thrill and power, not to mention ratings, when you could make even a Prime Minister squirm. But in the end, if he liked their politics, Ray made sure his listeners liked them, too. Which was why, he allowed himself a smile, everyone did their best to keep their golden boy happy.

‘Hi, baby!’

At the door to the striking, modern two-storey home, there was someone else waiting to keep him happy. As he took in the small, curvy body in the tiny leopard-print bikini and the shoulder-length tangle of tawny hair, Ray still couldn’t believe his luck.

Lisa Reardon threw her lithe, tanned arms around her husband’s neck and gave him his usual warm welcome. As her young, warm body pressed against his own, Ray felt the juices rise in him as quickly as always. Five years down the track and he felt sure he was never going to need to look elsewhere ever again. He had everything to keep him happy.

Half an hour later, showered and changed into his summer uniform of Italian linen shorts and shirt, he sat with a long icy gin and tonic beside his wife on the broad shady veranda.

‘Paradise...’ he breathed, as he took in the broad sweep of ocean in front of them. Even now, he never took any of this for granted. He’d spent a lot of time around the coast here when he was a kid, driving over an hour in his third-hand Holden with his

crappy, dinged-up board in the back. But even his vivid imagination hadn't stretched to seeing himself with a multimillion-dollar pad like this. Back then, he'd been just another weekend surfer dude from Sydney's soulless western suburbs, bored to shit with his go-nowhere job in a local car yard. The beach had been his escape: surfing all day and then a quick roll in the back of the car with one of a line of easy young chicks before heading back to the shit box he called home. Yet he'd always been sure that one day he'd escape. The same way Lisa too had looked for her own way out.

He turned now and smiled at her. 'You ever miss that great metropolis of Manchester, baby?'

Stretched out on the lounge beside him, his young, sexy wife rolled her eyes behind her dark glasses. 'Oh God, yes. Do you know how totally depressing this sun and warmth is after that blissful freezing cold? How much I miss those blankets of grey clouds and tramping off to work in the dark? They really should arrest you, Ray, for keeping me prisoner here. I'm totally under your control.'

They both laughed and he thought again how lucky he was to have landed this hot little prize. Lisa had only been in the country fourteen months when they'd met in a VIP area at the Melbourne Cup. She'd told him later how she and a friend had talked their way past security at the door, and he'd liked that about her. The breezy self-confidence, the easy charm, the unfettered boldness to challenge the rules. They were similar in that way. He'd rarely taken no for an answer as he'd forged his way to the top.

'I got a dip in this morning,' Lisa said, looking at the breakers. 'It's blown up a bit rough now though.'

'Yeah well, there are other things to do.' Ray put down his empty glass and ran his fingers down his wife's tanned, taut thigh. All his... He still had to pinch himself sometimes. And she so clearly adored him.

Lisa Reardon kept the smile on her face. Now there was something to look forward to.

Membership at The Peninsula Club opposite the beach was keenly sought and the waiting list was long. Tradition counted at the Peninsula and the place hadn't been allowed to change much in the last 50 years. It was a long, low building with a touch of the Hamptons in its white shutters and wide stone terrace. Circled by tall sentinels of Norfolk pines, it was tucked into the bottom of a hill dotted with the multimillion-dollar getaways of the city's super wealthy.

Now, in December, the main lounge area was busy as members and their guests dropped in for pre-dinner drinks.

In the centre of the room, Derek Porter sat at his usual table with his wife Robbie and a clutch of other well-to-do friends. A wealthy stockbroker, he was one of the mainstays of the club and the local area. Porter & Company sponsored various events and clubs, including Nippers, Life Savers, surfing competitions and the local Rotary and Lions Clubs. So what if Derek wanted to talk louder than anyone else in the room, or if he loved to be fêted for his philanthropy? It didn't really matter when you considered the good he did.

This evening, his bulky frame thrust tightly into the blue and white casual seating, he was holding forth on a topic everyone could agree on—the creeping development of the local area. Everyone that is, except one of the country's most successful developers who was sitting two tables away.

From where she sat beside her husband, Robbie Porter couldn't miss the glowering expression on the construction magnate's face as he was forced to listen to Derek's booming opinion. But, married more than four decades, Robbie knew better than to try to tone her husband down. From the very early days of their marriage she'd had to live with Derek's overweening

confidence in his own opinions and abilities; born, no doubt, of being brought up in wealth and privilege, of attending the city's best schools, and mixing from an early age with others of power and influence. Her eyes darkened as she took another sip of her vodka cocktail. Derek had always done exactly as he pleased, when he pleased...

But then she saw one way to escape Derek's monologue, at least for a few minutes.

'Excuse me everyone. Must say hello to Lyndy, haven't seen her in an age.'

Her husband barely noticed as she left the table.

Ten minutes later as she rejoined their group of eight, Robbie was fully aware she'd found one way to shut her husband up. But she'd leave it to tomorrow's newspapers to reveal what Lyndy had just told her. After all, the wife of a man whose company owned the news wasn't likely to have got her facts wrong.

Even in her forties, Margot Mason was fit enough to take the steep path through the scrub to her home above the sea. Tall and lean, she wore one of the sheer, expensive caftans she designed herself and her dark hair was tied back in a casual knot. As she crossed the road from the beach, she caught the low buzz of conversation and laughter that spilled from the terrace of the Club. It was the 'season' now, the place would be busy for weeks, and Margot knew exactly who would be there.

Perhaps, if she felt like being provocative, she'd go and have a drink one afternoon. That should stir some of them who still considered her a threat to their paunchy, balding husbands. As if. And, of course, there were still those who would lean across a table and, in a whisper, fill in any newcomers on her history. Not that it bothered her. Why should it? In some ways, Margot felt everything had happened for a reason. She had got what she deserved.

Five minutes later, she let herself into her timber split-level home with its glimpses of the ocean through the trees. It was more modest than most of her neighbours', but that's the way she liked it. The huge place she'd lived in during her marriage was further up the hill and on its umpteenth reno, the latest reincarnation appearing to have pretensions to a Moorish palace.

In the kitchen, she poured herself a glass of sav blanc and carried it out to the deck. She was glad she'd had the guts to come back to the area. Even after everything that had happened. Her business meant having to live in the city, but she'd always liked being near the ocean.

As she took a sip of chilled wine, Margot thought back to those days when she'd had everything she'd always thought she wanted.

And the terrible price she'd had to pay.

TWO

1961

It was the hottest of February days when Rose Walton arrived in Sydney. She was three days past her eighteenth birthday and knew that at last her real life was about to begin.

Filled with anticipation, she shrugged off the fatigue of her four-hour train trip and, with shabby suitcase in hand, made her way through the crowds at Central Station. Her fair, wavy hair felt sticky against her neck as she emerged onto the hot and busy pavement.

Barely noticing the pedestrians who swept by, she moved to the kerb and placed her luggage at her feet. She had dreamt of this for so long and now just wanted to stand for a moment and take in the sights and sounds of this wonderful city—the place where her future, her amazing, exciting future, would unfold.

It wasn't the first time she had been to Sydney. There had been that very brief visit six years ago when her mother had somehow scraped together the money to consult the doctor she called a "specialist". Rose had sat alone in the small,

timber-panelled waiting room with its thick green carpet and brown leather chairs. She remembered the ticking of the clock on the wall and only being able to see the top of the fancy hairdo of the lady who sat behind the reception counter.

It had seemed a long time before the heavy, polished door of the doctor's room opened again and, as her mother was ushered out, Rose caught a glimpse of a tall, bushy-eyebrowed man in a three-piece suit who muttered something in a deep, low voice.

Her mother paid the bill, counting out the rather crumpled notes from her purse and then the two of them took the clanking, jerky lift down to the marble floor at ground level.

'Are you going to be all right, Mum?' Out on the street, Rose gave an anxious sideways glance at her mother who hadn't yet uttered a word. Rose could barely remember her father who'd been killed in the war. Surely her mother wasn't going to die, too?

Sylvia Walton, small-boned and auburn-haired, wasn't the type to give in to displays of emotion. Walking purposefully as usual, and with eyes focused straight ahead, she replied briskly to her daughter's question.

'I'm glad you and I have made this trip, Rose. It's good for us to have seen Sydney together.' Then she turned and flashed her daughter a quick tight smile, 'Now what say we take a ferry ride to Manly and eat fish and chips on the beach?'

Delighted by the suggestion, Rose didn't notice that her mother hadn't answered her question.

Four months later, Sylvia Walton was dead.

Now, as she stood in the sunshine outside the station, Rose was remembering that visit with her mother. She recalled her first stunned view of the vast beauty of the harbour, the important-looking sandstone buildings, the pavements full of well-dressed people bustling about their business. Everything had been so

different from life in a small country town. There were trams and cars and huge emporiums whose windows displayed the marvellous treasures inside. But she and Mum had had no time or money for things like that—within a few hours they were back on the train to a place with one main street where everyone knew everyone, and nobody's business was private.

Yet even that quick short glimpse was enough for Rose to make a silent promise to herself: one day she would come back and live in Sydney.

Six years later, no one had tried to stop her. She sensed quite early on that Auntie Bev had only grudgingly taken her in after Mum had died. She'd been just another mouth to feed and, as she'd grown older, and with work so hard to find in a country town, Rose was unable to pull her weight.

Marriage was the path most of her friends were eager to choose, and she had that option too, she could see. It was clear Will McKenzie was sweet on her. They'd gone to school together, danced the Pride of Erin in the community hall, swum in the brown shallows of Stoney Creek. And Auntie Bev had reminded her often enough that the McKenzies owned a big merino spread two hours out of town. Will himself had told Rose that the place would be his in the future. Not a very subtle way perhaps of letting her know he wanted her to be part of that future, too.

And maybe if she had really fallen for him, she might have been happy to stay. Will was hard-working, kind and shy, not rowdy and too fond of the grog like a lot of his mates. But his life would always be in the bush and Rose wanted more than that. She wanted a life where things didn't stay the same, where each day brought new experiences, taught her more about the world. And she wanted love, too. The sort of love that would make her dizzy with joy, that would fill her heart and soul and every cell in her body. For having lost those closest to her at so young an

age, she wanted to belong to someone she would never ever have to lose.

A long time afterwards, she wondered how differently things might have turned out if her first sight of Sydney as a child hadn't lit that sense of yearning for something more. Instead, as she had stepped onto the train to Sydney that day, she was heading heedlessly to her fate.

With only a bare minimum of savings from the few hours a week she'd worked behind the counter at Finlay's Drapers store at home, Rose knew she had to get herself organised quickly. She'd found a room at the YWCA near Hyde Park. It was cheap and central to everything and she met other girls like herself, girls who had left other quiet country towns searching for adventure and a future in the city. And no doubt, they too were looking for love.

A month later, she had begun to find her way around. Every morning as she walked from the bus stop to the department store where she had found a job, she never failed to feel a thrill of excitement. Not only was she living in Sydney, she was working in the best place in the world; David Jones department store with its vast marble floors, its tinkling grand piano by the main entry, its brilliant window displays and tantalising merchandise was a wonderland of style and elegance. Each time she pushed open the heavy glass doors, saw the glitter of the chandeliers and caught the scent from the huge vases of blooms on top of gleaming glass shelves, Rose delighted in the magical world she was now a part of.

Due to her experience at Mr Finlay's, she'd been offered a position in haberdashery on the lower ground floor. Dressed in the DJ uniform of black skirt and white blouse, her fair hair tied back by a black grosgrain ribbon, she spent her day helping well-dressed, elegant customers find the perfect buttons or lace or

ribbon trims, all under the watchful eye of Mrs Dee. A woman of indeterminate age, Mrs Dee had run the haberdashery department at David Jones for more than fifteen years. To Rose, she cut a rather intimidating figure with her dark hair drawn into a severe chignon, and a slash of red lipstick the only colour on her pale, powdered complexion.

On her first day, doing her best to hide her nerves, she had listened carefully as the older woman filled her in on what was expected of those lucky enough to work at Sydney's leading department store.

'We're all part of the David Jones family here, Rose, and we have one goal only—to ensure our customers are kept happy. These are sophisticated, worldly women not only from the city, but from rural areas, too. As I am sure you know, there's a great deal of wealth in our wool industry and our customers come to David Jones for the quality and service. It's our job to ensure they find it.'

Just for a second, Rose thought of Will and his family's vast merino station. If she'd stayed and married him, she might have been one of those well-dressed, well-off women on the other side of the counter.

But as soon as the thought entered her head, she immediately dismissed it.

No, she hadn't made a mistake. She was in Sydney. This is what she had always dreamed of. Everything would be perfect from now on.

Sometimes, only in retrospect can we see the patterns in our life, those moments that are the catalyst for all that happens later. As it happened, it was only a couple of weeks after she began working at DJs that Rose was set on the path to her future.

She was in the staff cafeteria on her afternoon tea break,

carrying a cup of milky tea towards a spare table when suddenly she was bumped from behind.

‘Oh, I’m so sorry! I’m such an idiot. Did you get any on you?’

Rose turned, and for a moment made no reply as she took in the sight of the tall, slim girl with dark, glossy hair. Even dressed in her simple black and white DJs uniform, her beauty dazzled—her flawless complexion, her large, dark-lashed amethyst eyes and perfect figure.

‘I... I don’t think so.’

‘Yes, you did. Look.’ The girl pointed a long scarlet nail at the damp spots on Rose’s skirt. ‘Come on, I’ll sponge you off in the Ladies.’

With an air of command, she took the cup from Rose’s hand and placed it on the nearest table. ‘You can get another later.’

And that was how Margot Mason came into Rose’s life.

Rose had never met anyone like Margot before. She was only two years older, but her self-confidence and aura of glamour gave her an air of sophistication that Rose couldn’t help envying.

Margot worked on one of the cosmetic counters on the ground floor amid the seductive and expensive-looking bottles and tubes and creams with names Rose couldn’t even begin to pronounce.

‘Make-up is a woman’s best friend,’ Margot proclaimed to Rose at that first meeting. ‘Well,’ she’d added with a cheeky smile, ‘after diamonds, I suppose.’

From then on, the two caught up regularly on their breaks and Margot seemed to take Rose under her wing.

‘I know what it’s like to be starting out in this city. It helps to have someone show you the ropes. You don’t want to find yourself in trouble.’

Rose wasn’t quite sure what Margot meant by that, but she was happy to have a friend who was clearly so much worldlier

than herself. It surprised her a little when she learned that Margot had arrived in Sydney from Adelaide only six months before.

‘There were seven of us at home in a Housing Commission flat. Irish Catholics...’ Rose rolled her eyes. ‘My poor mother. And that surely wasn’t the life I wanted for myself. I made a beeline for Sydney as soon as I’d saved enough.’

‘Just like me,’ Rose responded. Except that she’d only left Aunty Bev behind and she’d seemed relieved, if anything, to see her go.

It wasn’t long before Rose was completely under her new friend’s spell. Sometimes when she had her break, she would take the staff elevator to the ground floor and wait discreetly nearby while Margot finished serving a customer. As always, she was in awe of her friend’s self-assurance, her ability to flatter and advise and charm customers into buying everything she convinced them they needed.

‘Now Madam, I’m thrilled you’ve availed yourself of our very best skin care range, but what about this lipstick? Quite perfect for your skin tone. And see, it’ll be a wonderful match with this rouge.’

And as Rose watched, the middle-aged woman in the smart fitting suit and fashionable hat glowed as she walked away with her treasure trove of miracles.

‘You’re an absolute marvel, Margot,’ Rose whispered in glee as they headed for the elevator that would take them to the staff cafeteria. ‘That pile must have cost a fortune. Do you really believe all those creams and potions work?’

Margot grinned. ‘It’s my job to convince *them* to believe it, Sweetie. You know what they say about the Irish gift of the gab.’

They both giggled as the elevator doors opened.

It wasn’t long before Margot made it clear she was keen to work her magic on Rose, too. As they were leaving work one evening,

she said, 'Don't take this the wrong way, Sweetie, you're far from plain, but you should try a little make-up, see what it can do for you. Why not come over to my place next Sunday arvo and I'll see if I can transform you into Lana Turner.'

Catching Rose's look of astonishment, Margot laughed. 'Just kidding. That one's in a class of her own. Don't want you attracting the wrong company after all, do we?'

Even as she joined in the laughter, Rose was thinking that it wasn't the make-up that mattered as much as knowing that she would catch up with Margot on the weekends. It wasn't easy, she'd found, making friends in a big city. Most of the other girls she'd met at work had boyfriends as well as their families and were busy on weekends. At least now she would have an afternoon with Margot to look forward to.

On the Sunday, she caught the bus to Potts Point. Margot lived in leafy Victoria Street in a one-room flat with a shared bathroom. It was on the third floor of what had once been a grand terrace home and what it lacked in space, it more than made up for with its view of Sydney Harbour.

'It's fantastic,' Rose breathed as she stood by the window with its faded floral curtains. About two dozen small boats with their weekend sailors were skimming along in the wind and she could also see one of the famous Sydney ferries heading towards bustling Circular Quay.

'All view and no comfort,' Margot replied dryly as she stood beside her. 'The first place I could afford when I arrived. Sometimes in the evening, I pour myself a whisky and just take it all in. Try to imagine what it must have felt like to have been on that First Fleet, sailing into this massive harbour for the first time.'

'Particularly after such a long hard trip,' Rose replied, as much taken aback as impressed that Margot would be sophisticated enough to have alcohol at home and actually take a drink alone.

'Damned hard for the poor Irish convicts.'

There was a surprisingly sharp note to Margot's tone, and Rose turned away from the view to look at her.

'Convicted on the whole because they were hungry and impoverished—or rebelling against their overlords, and then only good as slave labour in establishing the English colony here. But they don't tell us much about *that* part at school, do they?'

Rose tried to change the mood. 'Many of the Irish have done quite well though haven't they since then?'

'You're quite right, Sweetie, and,' Margot's sunny smile was back, 'this one's going to do even better still.'

Rose wasn't quite sure what her new friend meant. She couldn't imagine what might be better than living in this fascinating city, working in such a grand place as David Jones and looking forward to an exciting future.

After a cup of tea, Margot opened her "bag of tricks" as she called it, and set to work. Rose sat in excited anticipation as her cheeks were brightened with rouge, her brows tidied and darkened, and her lips touched up with the perfect shade of peach. Then, opening a little pallet, Margot used a tiny drop of water, to work up a thick dark emulsion with a small brush.

'I usually just use a bit of spit myself,' she said with a grin as she applied the dark paste to Rose's lashes. Finished, she stood back, and looked at Rose with a critical eye. 'I reckon that's it... just enough. You don't want to look like a panda.'

She handed Rose a small hand mirror. 'OK, have a look and tell me what you think.'

As she took in her reflection, Rose caught her breath. Eyes glowing with delight, she turned to Margot. 'Oh, my goodness... You're a wonder, Margot! It's still me, but... a *better* me.' Enthralled, she looked back at the mirror. 'I look older... more... well, more grown-up somehow.'

Margot smiled. 'Well, if you're so pleased with yourself why

don't we go out and show you off then? There's a milk bar on the corner. Let's have an early tea.'

'A milk bar? You mean like in America?' Rose breathed.

'More or less. Only don't expect Clark Gable or Robert Taylor movie star types. They don't make them like that around here.'

Later, as she took the bus home, Rose thought it had been the most exciting afternoon of her life. The milk bar in Darlinghurst Road was called Burts, and even though it was busy, Margot had walked in as if she owned the place. Trailing behind her, Rose was hoping they might sit on the high stools at the bar, but Margot headed for one of the booths.

'Don't want to have our backs to the place and miss all the action, Sweetie.'

Rose realised she was right of course as she slid into her seat and took in the mirrored walls behind the high-topped bar, the soda fountains, the big glass jars of lollies on the counters and the waitresses in their smart uniforms. To her delight she even saw a small group gathered around... a jukebox!

'This is just amazing, Margot! Have you been here before?'

Her friend smiled. 'I think of it as my local. You meet all sorts here.'

Rose saw what she meant. Some of the crowd really stood out, the girls in their big hooped skirts, and the boys in pink shirts or jackets, their black pants tapered to their ankles.

'I've never seen a man wearing pink before.'

'Sure wouldn't work in Adelaide,' Margot replied as she opened the clasp on her handbag. 'I can only imagine what my brothers would do if they saw some of this lot.' Pulling out a packet of cigarettes, she pinched one out with her long scarlet nails. 'Want one?' She offered the packet to Rose.

'Oh, no...' Rose was a bit taken aback. 'I mean, thanks a lot

but uh, not now.’ She had never liked it when Aunty Bev lit up but she wasn’t going to tell Margot that.

‘Can I light that for you?’

A man with dark blonde, slicked back hair, wide checked pants and a crooked grin was suddenly beside them with a match ready to strike.

As Rose watched, Margot gave him a long half-smile.

‘I’m perfectly fine, thanks so much.’ And pulling out a small metal lighter, she bent her head and lit the cigarette herself.

Looking a little nonplussed, the young man walked away, and Margot, leaning across the table, said quietly, ‘Did you see those pants? No thank you.’

Suddenly they were both giggling and Rose could only think again how amazingly self-confident Margot was. She could never have done that. Never.

Other Works by Jennifer Bacia

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It's the Swinging 60s. Post-war Australia is booming and the excitement of Sydney lures two young women, Rose and Margot, eager for adventure in these rapidly changing times.

They meet through work, and country-girl Rose is in awe of glamorous, worldly Margot, who makes it clear her ambitions stretch far beyond the cosmetic sales counter of David Jones, Sydney's iconic department store.

At a coffee bar in cosmopolitan Kings Cross, they encounter two debonair Europeans, Stefan and Josef, former Polish army officers seeking to rebuild their lives. Friendship grows between the foursome, and the women's eyes are opened to a world of ideas and experience very different from the one they grew up in.

Rose is drawn to the handsome, reserved, Stefan, but he is a complex man clearly marked by his wartime experiences. As for Margot, penniless immigrants aren't her type. Instead, ignoring the danger signs, she has set her sights on the city's most eligible bachelor. But it's a tragedy neither woman sees coming which is about to change their lives forever.

Fast-forward over two decades later, and a top-rating media program has begun investigating a long-ago murder on the sleepily opulent Northern Beaches. The locals are abuzz with speculation. Some have reason to feel nervous – including the police. Others, who've stayed silent for years, are at last tempted to tell the truth. A truth Margot and Rose could never have imagined.

From Sydney's deceptive glitter, to the grit of Warsaw under siege, *Dark Side of the Harbour* is a masterpiece of suspense, a story of courage, resilience and deadly secrets – where only the strongest bonds survive.

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