

## Jedd Jockman

### A Short Story

As dusk fell Jebb flipped off his hat banged it on his knee. Red dust billowed like pillars of smoke. Sweat dripped into his mouth a fly sat eagerly waiting. A flock of Cockatoos flew by he watched and thought “even the birds don't stop here anymore” It hadn't rained for so long weeds competed for the last drop of water. The wood screen door softly banged causing him to look, he was sure he closed it. Dora's old rocking chair caught his attention, his mother loved that chair. Every evening she watched birds fly from the eucalyptus trees those trees died away too. He thought about his mother refusing to leave the property after his father died. So they both stayed, he had no choice really, he couldn't have left her alone.

Dora used to say “ this land is our blood and sweat” he thought “my blood and sweat you mean” resentment blistering .

All he thought about for years was leaving this dying land. Boarding school was his escape near the sea that's where he felt alive

he envisioned the clean salted air , took a deep breathe savouring the memory. At every chance he spent watching the boats in the bay.

The plan clearly set in his young min. Work hard, save hard get his first boat seemed simple enough. At sixteen his fathers stroke would change that. Suddenly found himself back sailing on bull dust. Forced to run the property while Dora cared for his Glenn.

Years progressed Jebb worked long, hard, alone the hum of a generator his companion.

He never married the land became his life. He wasn't sold on the idea its in the blood as he father would say. He considered it born of necessity what he didn't expect was the spirit of the land sneaks up on you. The solitude stretches its arms out like the morning sunshine and engulfs you beckoning you to become one this begun his love, hate relationship with the land.

At first he tried to get his father to sell but gave up on that idea it was the catalyst of many

arguments. Over time he resigned himself to his fate.

Glenn had lived for another ten years after his stroke. Dora lived another fifteen after that. Twenty five years Dora and Jebb ran what was left of the property. Years of draughts destroyed the land and bank loans eventually stripped away ownership. Dora had passed away last week he sighed and wiped a small tear away. banging diverted his attention.

“ Its that darn screen door again” he jumped up and walked to the screen pushing it shut. As he turned he notice his mothers rocking chair again it was moving. Moving closer investigating the chair looking for any defects. He knew it was unlikely the chair was immaculate.

Dora had this smile as she rocked like an overfed cat satisfied and full.

He always wondered what was going through her mind but never dare ask.

He was a reserved man and kept to himself mostly. His hand ran over the rockers not a notch to be found. Putting his hand onto the backrest to stop it standing there for a few minutes just watching when the phone rang.

### The Deal

Jebb felt somewhat relieved after the phone call from Ron Madden a property owner about three hundred kilometre drive from the Jockmans. Maddens was a lot closer to town just two hours away. He made a deal with Madden the deal wasn't great he would work at half the rate for free board. Times had change and most properties were struggling to stay afloat. The draught had hit the country hard. Maddens parents who lived on the property, where getting on in years requiring more help. Jebb was happy at this point having a roof over his head. At least the few bucks he does earn he can save and one day live closer to the sea. long given up on a big boat like the ones at boarding school. Checking the room one last time honestly he didn't have much left a backpack filled with odds and ends, a large suitcase filled with clothes and a padlocked metal box filled with tools and of course Dora's chair. One last look back at the family home, Sadness filled him all was truly laid to waste. The rickety screen door the timber deck, all was weathered and worn. A small whirl wind

skipped along the verandah coating it with more red dust. At least Madden had a nice room for him, although small it was fully contained. He jumped in his ute looked in the rear vision mirror and drove away.

### The Maddens

It had been six months almost. Working from sunup to sundown repairing fences across the Madden station. Most nights he was too tired to socialise with the Madden family that consisted of Ron , Ron's wife, their two children and Ron's Parents in their late seventies. Grabbing a beer he sat on the front porch watching flickering lights across the lawn at the Maddens place the sound of country music playing and background chatter engaged him. He sat there with his eyes closing exhausted. Smashing glass awoke him. He looked down at the beer bottle that slipped out of his hand . He really did feel tired also defeated. Trapped in a place he didn't really want to be. Working his guts out for little reward. He walked inside and chastised himself “no point bloody whinging ” laying down he shut his eyes.

It was a the last Saturday of the month. Jebb went into town once a month he got mail and supplies. The town had a small chain supermarket mostly everything you need can be found there. The liquor store and post office. Liquor was his second stop, first stop pick up the mail.

He looked at the man behind the counter “five cartons of draught thanks mate” paying he turned headed towards his ute. Gone! confused he looked around “where the hell is my car?” he yelled scanning the area. Passerby's turning to look. Frustrated he turned towards the local police station. Pushing that trolley filled with beer all the way.

The town has had a spate of car thefts over the last few weeks the police told him. The police drove him all the way back to Maddens. The whole two hours Jebb sat in silence his head down, numb, stunned.

They pulled up at the front porch as he got out his legs heavy and weakened. Unpacking the beer

he thanked the officer.

He sat down on the porch watching the police speed away in a haze of red dust until no longer visible. Grabbing another beer from one of the cartons he sculled it then did another. Everything playing over in his mind all his losses Dora, his home, his car, his life. Now his independence gone! Stolen! "I cant breathe" he whispered as his chest tightened in panic "I cant do this anymore" tears welled in his eyes. Gathering enough strength he went inside sat on his bed his thoughts more toxic with each beer, despair grew. He got up and lent on the bench taking off his knife sheath. His hand slid over the knife handle pulling it from its cover, a finger slid down the blade he barley noticed as blood poured down it. In an explosive fit of rage he swung repeatedly stabbing the nearby pillow. Broken he lay on the floor sobbing, covered in cushion foam. The next morning a splitting headache and a mouth as baron as the Jockmans ravaged him.

Dragging himself to his feet static foam stuck to his body, grabbing a large bottle of water took a long scull "aah" wiping his lips. The day was spent sleeping, hydrating in the distance a generator hummed a lullaby reminding him of home . It wasn't until late afternoon he felt well enough to great the day and started to clean up the contents of the pillow. He noticed a letter had fallen onto the floor he opened it.

*"Dear Mr Jebb Jockman,*

*My name is John Wise, it is with much sadness to hear the passing away of Mrs Dora Jockman I'm writing to you in regards to Dora's financial affairs. If you could please come to see me at the following location. Looking forward to meeting you soon.*

*Pittwater Newport Marina., NSW*

Confused and curious Dora never mentioned John Wise? what affairs could it be ? The last thing he needed was more debts. Jebb sorted time off with Madden and hitched a ride to town. He boarded a train heading for the city. Finally the train squealed to a stop then a taxi to the marina.

## 'The Jebb Jockman'

Walking the dock he was coming alive. The yachts, sailboats, he took a deep breathe of salted sea air 'heaven' .

As he looked ahead stood glistening gem out shining all others, a grand boat. It was an Odyssey Jeanneau, it was at least 45 foot it's magnificent.

His steps quickened to get a better look. He stood at the boats bow in large blue writing the boats name 'The Jebb Jockman'.

A chubby little bald man came out onto the deck waving and yelling “Hello can I help you?”

“ My names Jebb Jockman” John waved him up “ I'm John, I've been waiting for you” he smiled “come on up”.

The caretaker John explained that Dora bought this boat when his father died.

John rented the boat ever since and lived here so long it was home. Johns mind wandered and visible sadness filled Johns face. John continued “rent was paid into a bank account” passing him a card. Jebb phoned the bank to get more information the account was in his name almost half a million dollars, his head was spinning.

They continued to chat away through the late afternoon. Jebb gazed his surrounds lights from the city mirrored on the water he could barley believe it or contain his joy. After a light dinner, a few drinks they retired for the night. This was the first time he could remember he felt at peace a new beginning was opening before him. As for John his world was now at its end. Well into his sixties jobs hard to , homelessness real.

Jebb was on top of the world as he walked around his deck with a cup of coffee in hand, but his mind wouldn't rest Johns predicament plagued him. He felt his distress he had just been there himself until yesterday he figured John had extra hurdles being almost seventy.

Later that evening as they chatted he turned to John “ You know this boat John its big I'm going to need help if you will stay on and help” lifting his beer to John smiling “cheers” Johns obvious mood lifted a deep sigh sealed the deal “ Cheers Jebb ”

The Jebb Jockman set its sails, the sun made its way across the horizon. A final scene two weathered men sitting on a deck as waves lap the hull, beer in hand content.