

BIDDY AND JUSTIN SERIES
BOOK TWO

PACIFIC INCIDENT

9-11-13



PAMELA M. ARNOLD

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By
Pamela M. Arnold



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from Sapol, James Garrett, Mary Williams, Heather Butterworth,
Bill Rumbelow, Kay Sims and Susan Mac.Dermott.

DEDICATION

To Elfreda, who taught me that persistence is the key.

CHAPTER ONE

Taysir would be fifteen today. Was it better to know if her brother had been murdered when he was five, or for him to have just been kidnapped?

After unpacking supplies of beauty masks, cleansers, toners, and moisturisers in the *Pacific Queen Royale* spa, Rukan Khanaum arranged them neatly on the shelves. She then spread the pink sheets on the massage bed in her designated beauty cubicle.

She would enjoy pampering and massaging the bodies and egos of decadent Australian women, spending a fortune on beauty treatments and travel, while women and children were living in poverty or being murdered in war-torn countries. Revenge would be sweet.

Sometimes she wondered what it would have been like to grow up in a secure, happy family like most Australian women, free to pursue independent careers, not beholden to men, free to wear what they chose and to speak their minds.

Now, on Saturday July 13th, 2013, she was about to embark from Sydney on a Pacific cruise, working on the luxury liner *Pacific Queen Royale* returning to Sydney September 11th, 2013.

“Biddy, darling, how does a three-month Pacific cruise appeal to you?”

Biddy swivelled to stare at Justin, the morning sun streaming in through the bay window framing his white hair against the

leather of his favorite wing chair, glasses perched on the end of his nose, his cup of morning tea in hand.

“Three months? How many stops?” she asked.

“Twenty-odd ports, Sydney to Sydney, on the luxury liner *Pacific Queen Royale*.”

Justin handed Bidy a brochure.

“I reckoned we deserve a real holiday before we’re too old to enjoy it, so I tentatively reserved a stateroom with balcony and a queen-size bed. I tried for a suite but they only have six, which were unfortunately all booked out. What do you think? Want to go?” He raised his silver eyebrows.

Bidy thoughtfully nibbled her thumb.

“Sounds wonderful, but who will take care of PO and Puffer for such a long time?”

“I knew you’d say that. There’s a lot to organise, but we’ve got months before the ship leaves. We’d find someone to take care of them.”

Justin glanced up at the huge Abyssinian cat asleep on top of the kitchen dresser in his comfortable duplex in Tusmore Park, South Australia. The cat, aptly named, PissOff (PO for short), gazed down at Justin through two contemptuous yellow slits, as if he fully understood they were about to abandon him to a house sitter. As though on cue, Puffer, Justin’s black and white Japanese Chin scratched at the patio screen door.

“No, we won’t abandon you either and no, you can’t come in,” Justin said, shaking his head at the small silky-haired dog. “Don’t scratch the door!”

Bidy Jennings looked doubtfully at her de facto husband, Justin Fuller, who was so anxious to marry her. She had endured some dramatic experiences with him, which had left her shaken and a little apprehensive about his aptitude for attracting murder and mayhem. Being an amateur detective was not her idea of retirement, although she had to admit, she had been the one to uncover the identity of the vicious murderess, and even though it was harrowing it had also been quite exciting.

Putting her cup down on his breakfast table, she smiled.

“Justin, darling, I know we’ve been discussing a cruise ever since the murders. And I admit that luxury accommodations sound like heaven, especially as we wouldn’t have to pack and unpack all the time, given we’d be gone for three months. But —” Biddy took another sip of her tea. “Thank you, I’d love to go. But —”

“No buts. We might be able to catch up with Anne, and Andy might even be in Singapore when we are there.”

Biddy smiled wistfully; she had grown up in Adelaide, was educated at Woodlands Girls Grammar School and had commenced training as a nurse before switching to design school. Subsequently, she won a coveted design competition, thus gaining a position with an overseas firm that encouraged talented young designers. Employed by a top fashion house, Biddy developed an eye for detail, basing even her casual designs on the classic. She produced elegant ranges, comfortable yet sophisticated which were snapped up by both smart Australian and European women of taste. At thirty she took the plunge and established her own fashion line *Auspertize*. Having been married twice, she had two adult children from the second marriage who both worked overseas— Andy, an engineer who moved around a good deal in his job, and Anne, who worked in IT in San Francisco.

Both her previous husbands had been rather chauvinistic and almost resentful of her success in the fashion world, hence her reluctance to enter another binding liaison. However, she was sorely tempted to marry Justin and to move in with him full time to lead what she had expected to be a comfortable, quiet life.

“We can have breakfast in bed every morning.”

“You forget we’re in our sixties. How fit do you think we are?”

“Some mornings we can just sleep.”

“Hang on,” Biddy demanded. “What about all the pirate attacks and terrorism on the high seas we keep reading about?”

“Bid, the pirates mainly operate in the Indian Ocean and security on the *Pacific Queen Royale* is second to none. I doubt that even terrorists would be able to board at any port, and as the big tourist ships sit so very high, it would be very difficult to board on the open sea. In addition, the ships are protected now by water cannon. Actually, the *Pacific Queen Royale* only just passes under the Sydney Harbor Bridge, which she is scheduled to do on her return.” He opened the information sheet. “Here we are, top speed 23.5 knots, total height—”

Biddy patted his shoulder. “I believe you, but three months is a long time to be away.”

She paused to inspect the brochure. “What if, instead of leaving from Sydney, we fly to San Francisco, have a few days with Anne, then pick up the cruise on the home run?”

Pushing her tea cup aside and tucking her short silver blonde hair behind her ear, she spread the brochure on the small oak breakfast table and used her finger to trace the ship’s route.

“If we board in San Francisco, the next stop is Victoria, then Vancouver in Canada, on to Juneau, Kodiak, Ketchikan, across to Petropavlovsk in Russia, down to Osaka in Japan, on to Shanghai, Hong Kong, then Sihanoukville in Cambodia, on to Singapore, home to Australia via Darwin, before Sydney. By joining the cruise mid-way we still have a day in each of twelve ports. I guess you’ve already taken into account the fact that I still have *Auspertize* outlets in both Hong Kong and Singapore, so it’ll be a chance to visit and a tax deduction. I think the shorter trip would be great.” Biddy’s fair skin was flushed, her blue eyes shining.

Justin got up and almost ran to the dresser, excited because he felt that this holiday together may finally convince Biddy to marry him. He picked up the phone that sat on top, right next to a bowl of fruit and several exotic brass candlesticks.

“I’ll change the booking to join the ship in San Francisco.”

As she listened to him confirm the booking, Biddy glanced at her slim wrists: the faint scars were still visible from where the

wire had cut her when the murderess had tied her wrists to the arms of a wheel chair and hidden her in a closet. She wriggled her shoulders, trying to shake the tension that threatened to build with her memories of their last adventure together, when they had been embroiled in four murders. Those included the death of an old friend from nursing school and her own dog Schnitzel, a German schnauzer that had tried to defend her. She told herself that it would be really relaxing on a Pacific cruise with security everywhere, and it would be wonderful to spend a few days with her daughter.

“All done, too late to change your mind. We leave from San Francisco,” Justin announced excitedly as he put the phone back in its cradle.

“Great. I feel quite dizzy, thinking about it. There’s so much to do before we leave,” Bidy said, still slightly apprehensive. “Justin, you look just like the cat that ate the cream.”

“Well, I’ll help you get ready, darling, I know you enjoy travelling. We’ll have fun, Bidy. I guarantee it.”

“Fine. One thing, though—you’re strictly prohibited from finding any bodies.”

“Come on, Ms. Marple, as much as I would like to have been the hero, you were the one who solved the crime and found the murderess,” Justin grumbled.

“Well, actually, she found me,” Bidy said ruefully.

Thoughtfully rubbing the scarred and deformed little finger on her left hand, she remembered the harrowing time of what the press had dubbed the “Tusmore Park Murders”.

Two years prior, living opposite Tusmore Park, Justin would walk their two dogs there every day and twice had the misfortune to find two of the four elderly bodies — murdered. He became a suspect and was harassed by the Adelaide Police. Bidy had become embroiled, solved the murders, and while doing so had nearly died at the hands of the psychopathic murderess herself. She did not at all enjoy thinking back on this ordeal, and tried to brush away the memories. She was glad when Justin changed the subject.

“Perhaps Janine might house-sit here to mind the animals, and we could sell or let your house?” Justin said.

During the murders they had built up a firm friendship with Detective Senior Sergeant Janine West, newly engaged to Architect Steve Cilento, who had also been involved in the dramatic events.

Not far from Justin’s, Biddy’s home also overlooked Tusmore Park. Although they now spent most of their time together, they did not live together full time; even though Justin had been urging Biddy to marry him for some years, she stubbornly kept her house and her independence.

Being a fairly staid retired accountant, Justin adored Biddy, finding her exotic and exciting. He was never quite sure what she would do next, and was frustrated that she refused to tie the knot.

Biddy placed her left hand on her hip and pointed her right forefinger at him.

“Justin Fuller, I know your ulterior motive is to coax me to move in full time.”

He raised his hands.

“You’ll be able to wear all your glad rags in the evenings. I’ve booked for the late dinner sitting.”

Biddy laughed; he knew which buttons to press. Now that she had retired from the glamorous fashion scene, there were few opportunities to dress up. While she certainly did not miss the glitz and glamour, with her background, he knew she’d find a cruise hard to resist.

For the last few years their lives appeared to revolve around the park. They had even met while walking their dogs, and Biddy had complimented Justin’s dog Puffer on having the best dog smile in the park.

Justin really wanted to get Biddy away for a while to forget the murders in which they had become embroiled. By some incredible coincidence, the first body which he had unfortunately come across in the park, was actually that of the man who had

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been accused of the hit-and-run of Justin's own ten-year-old son many years before. It had never been proved that the fellow was guilty; although Justin was not even aware that the suspect lived nearby, the Police immediately jumped to the conclusion that Justin was the murderer seeking revenge. However, there were subsequently other murders to follow, and Bidy, knowing that Justin was innocent, took it upon herself to ferret out the murderess.

This sea change would do them both good; he doubted they would come across any murder and mayhem on the luxurious *Pacific Queen Royale*.

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