



MOONSTONE MAGIC



a book of short stories by

VIOLET APTE

Moonstone Magic

A Book of Short Stories

By

Violet Apted



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Moonstone Magic

Just another Tuesday! I thought as I had my shower. I could not have been more wrong! On the first day of term for my creative writing class there was a lot I had to do, so I wanted an early start. Catching the bus, I took the photocopying into the shop to collect later, before making my way to the library. That's when things started to go haywire.

When I asked for the key to the history room, the librarian, Pat, looked at me as if I had gone mad.

"You usually come in on Tuesdays," she said.

"Yes that's right," I replied, thinking it was she who had gone mad. "U3A Creative Writing." Before I could say any more the phone rang and Pat excused herself to answer it. Feeling confused I made my way to the history room, only to find a meeting in progress. Now I really was confused. How could I have got it so wrong? Feeling terribly embarrassed, I quickly made my way to the exit and hurried away.

What is wrong with me? I must really be getting old, I thought as I entered the shopping mall. Overwhelmed and suddenly feeling nauseous I found my way to the ladies room to give myself a chance to think. There was no doubt in my mind that yesterday had been Monday the twentieth of October, as I had spent the day with my family celebrating my husband's birthday. Panic welled up inside me; I felt like screaming. Was I losing my mind? Taking some deep breaths, I managed to calm myself down. *I must get back home,* I thought, but before I went for my bus, I would buy a newspaper and check the date. Still feeling very shaken, I was too embarrassed to stop for my usual friendly chat with the newsagent. I stuffed the newspaper into my shopping bag and was soon safely back home.

Visibly shaking, I made myself a cup of tea before taking the newspaper out of my bag. Thank goodness I was sitting down as I read on Friday, the twenty-fourth of October. I thought I was going to pass out from shock, but the pictures of devastation and the headline “Earthquake Hits Sydney” was an even bigger shock. I was reading the report of all the damage when the phone rang; it was my friend Margaret, calling from the library.

“Are you all right?” she asked.

I could detect the concern in her voice. “I’m not sure,” I answered, wondering whether to tell her what had happened. “Why do you ask?”

“Well, we are all waiting for you in class and you have never been late before, so we were worried in case you are sick,” she said. Now I really was confused and mumbled something about missing my bus.

Margaret told me that Norman, another class member, had volunteered to pick me up if that was the case.

I thanked her before putting the phone down and collapsing into my chair. Now I was more scared than anything else and could hardly stop shaking. What was happening to me? Was I going mad? Had something really odd happened to me, or was it all in my mind?

Then I saw the paper lying on the floor where I had dropped it when I answered the phone. The headline seemed to rush up and hit me: “Earthquake Hits Sydney” and the date October twenty-fourth. The room was spinning, and then everything went black as I fell to the floor.

I opened my eyes to find a doctor checking my pulse. Norman had phoned him after finding me unconscious on the floor. How could I tell anyone the truth about what had happened? I was sure they would lock me away if I did, so I decided to keep silent about my time warp experience. Until it happened again!

There were no ill effects from Tuesday’s confusion; in fact I felt very well, and spent the day visiting my family. Later I settled down to watch the evening film on television, and switched on just as the

lottery numbers were being drawn. Not being in the draw, I never took down the results, but as the balls finished rolling down I suddenly remembered the Friday newspaper. Retrieving it from under the cushion, where I had hidden it, my hands were shaking as I opened the pages. Yes! There they were: the winning numbers for Thursday's Powerball lottery. My excitement was hard to contain as I wrote them down.

There was little sleep for me that night, and Thursday morning I caught the early bus into Wynnun. Taking a lottery coupon from the table at the newsagent's, I carefully filled in the winning numbers. When I paid for my entry at the shop counter, I looked up at the notice board. Written in bold red letters was, "Twelve Million Dollar Powerball!" My excitement bubbled over as I hurriedly made my way home. When I sat and watched my numbers drawn that evening, I realised all my dreams would now come true, but I would never be able to tell anyone how it had happened.

I phoned my three children and within minutes they were in my lounge room dancing with joy. My daughter Maureen found her voice first. She looked me in amazement.

"You knew, Mum! You knew the winning numbers, didn't you?"

I could only nod my head as tears of joy streamed down my face.

"Just a strong feeling, dear," I said as I hugged her. My younger daughter, Beverley, and my son Steve joined in the hugging and we fell to the floor laughing. The next few weeks were spent indulging our dreams: buying houses, arranging travel, and helping other family members. I called a family conference to decide which friends and charities we would help. It was an amazing experience for us all.

It was months before the excitement died down. The media had a field day with the story, but our millions were safely in the bank, so we didn't mind all the fuss.

Three Months Later

Saying goodbye to my friend Margaret, whom I had been

visiting, I decided to go to the post office and cut through the alleyway from Florence Street to Edith Street, which I used occasionally. A car was blocking my way behind the shops, so I walked between two posts to get through. Suddenly it was raining, really pouring hard, and I ran the rest of the way to the post office. That's when I saw it: the date on the wall calendar read "Friday December seventeenth." It had happened again! Only now I knew where the time warp doorway was. The sudden change from sunshine to rain in the alleyway, it had to be! This time I had gone forward seven days, but I felt none of the confusion I had the first time. There were things I had to do before I could check out my theory.

Making my way quickly to the newsagent's, I bought copies of two different newspapers, and made a note of the all the week's lottery results on the notice board. Leaving the shopping centre, I made my way back to Edith Street. I wanted to see if my theory about the time warp doorway was right.

Soon I was walking back through the alleyway toward Florence Street. The car that had been blocking my way when I came through was gone, but I walked back between the same two posts, crossing my fingers and hoping I was correct. I was soaking wet from walking in the rain, but suddenly the sun was shining—I was right!

My mind was in a whirl as I hurriedly made my way back to the shopping centre and the newsagent's and noticed, as I bought a daily paper, that the numbers on the notice board were now the previous week's results. I was shaking so much I walked away without my change, and the newsagent called out to me. Thanking him, I made my way home as quickly as I could.

I gave each of my three children a set of numbers for that week's lottery. They never questioned if they were the winning numbers. One day I would tell them about my time warp doorway in Wynnum, but for now it was too powerful to share. I wanted to experience more little adventures into the future and make sure it was safe. When the news broke that every member of my family had won the lottery, we would have enough to cope with. Wouldn't we?

Six Months Later

My life changed dramatically from that moment on! Money was no longer a problem and, for the first time, I was able to achieve many of my life's ambitions. What I never expected were the side effects. Letters and phone calls overwhelmed me, all asking for the winning numbers for future lotteries. The biggest surprise of all was the offer by the lottery commission of \$50 million **not** to do so. They also banned me from entering any more games.

Inadvertently I had stumbled onto a totally unexpected side of being a lottery winner. Everyone wanted my advice. I was invited to give talks all over Australia, all expenses paid. I was famous! And I wasn't sure I liked it very much. You see, there was a down side. I was also hated! Mostly by the lottery organisers, who were afraid of my talent, but also by people who were jealous of my newfound wealth. All this came as a great shock to me, and I wasn't sure what to do about it. *Hopefully things will change in time*, I thought.

It was time to tell my children. I could not keep my secret time warp from them any longer and called them all to come round for tea. After explaining that what I was about to tell them must never be told to anyone, not even their closest loved ones, I asked them all to remain silent until I had finished speaking. Steve was the first to recover from the shock of my announcement.

"Wow, Mum! I knew there would be a pretty unusual reason for all that has happened, but I could never have guessed this in a million years. Can I come with you next time you go through your time warp?"

Maureen and Beverley joined in, "Yes, Mum, can we come too?"

"The answer to you all is no." Their faces dropped in disappointment, so I quickly added, "You don't have the ring!"

"What ring?" It was Maureen asking.

"Remember my moonstone ring? That is the key to my time warp and you have to be wearing it," I explained.

"I knew there had to be something special about that ring, Mum.

I was with you when you bought it in Folkestone when we were on holiday in UK, remember?"

"Yes, Beverley, I do remember. That was the little antique shop in the old high street! Ye Olde Antique Shoppe. What a strange shop it was, too, so dark inside."

Beverley laughed, "Yes, Mum, and so crowded we could hardly move around things."

My thoughts wandered back to the day I bought my ring. The little old man had almost insisted I buy the ring, and how it fitted my finger perfectly. Moonstone is my birthstone, which really was the deciding factor when I bought it. Steve's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"Just make sure you tell us when you think of going through again, Mum. Okay?"

I promised I would and reminded them all never to mention anything about it to anyone and they left.

My lovely house, being built overlooking Moreton Bay, was almost completed when I decided I was ready to go through the time warp doorway again. On August fifteenth, feeling very confident I walked through the posts and made my way to the post office to check the date. Startled, I read August fifteenth! What had gone wrong? It had not worked! Overcome by a sense of sheer disappointment, I walked dejectedly to the shopping plaza.

A stranger served me when I bought my newspaper. When I asked where my friends were, he looked surprised. "They sold up six months ago," he said, shaking his head as if to say, "poor old dear has lost her marbles." I paid for my paper and hurried away feeling really confused. Sitting down on one of the seats in the plaza, I opened the paper to check the date. Yes, it definitely was August fifteenth, but it was the year 2000. I had gone one year forward in time! I knew I would have to look at things around me very differently this time.

First I went down to the waterfront to look at my new house. The house and garden looked beautiful. Feeling very pleased to

know it had been completed and all was well, I walked up Pine Street, back to the terrace. I went to the library and spent two hours researching the news and events of the past twelve months, including world news of interest. A plan of action was forming in my mind as I did so. I would write a book of predictions! I'd become a modern-day Nostradamus.

My time travel seemed to be taking me further ahead each time I went through the doorway, so I could also collect plenty of material for a novel.

Glancing at my watch, I finished writing my notes, made my way back to the doorway and home. There was a lot of work ahead of me. *I should get myself a secretary*, I thought to myself later, as I took a shower. It would be quite a while before I would time travel again. What I did not know then was that it would almost be the last time I did.

The next few weeks I concentrated on my novel of predictions, working morning, noon, and night. With the notes I had collated from the library, and the newspapers I had brought back from my time warp trip, I found it so easy. When my manuscript was ready, I knew I needed some publicity—some good reviews—if I wanted my book to sell well. Thinking carefully of what to say, I phoned the editor of the *Courier Mail* newspaper. He recognised my name as the lottery winner, and when I told him about my novel of predictions he decided to interview me himself. Within an hour he was sitting in my lounge room taking notes.

The editor introduced himself as Johnny Rhodes and agreed to run a story about my novel, on the condition he could publicise one of my predictions, which was exactly what I had hoped for. The prediction of an Australian celebrity's reunion with her 'lost' child was chosen, as the date of the reunion was so close. Before he left Jonny Rhodes asked me if I would do him a favour and give him a personal reading. I agreed that I would, but not until after my novel was published.

Smiling, he said, "At least let me take you out to lunch, Jacqui. We will have more time to chat."

I accepted his offer and we arranged to meet again very soon. The time passed too quickly and both of us realized there was a strong attraction between us.

The newspaper printed an article about my novel the following week. Within days the news of my prediction about the Australian celebrity was worldwide news when the person I had named celebrated a reunion with her son.

Things happened quickly after that; as expected, people were clamouring for more predictions from me. Orders taken even before my book was published made it an immediate best seller. Every one of the predictions forecast happened, as expected, and people clamoured for more. Time to enter my time warp again! *How far forward into the future would I go?* I wondered as I made my plans.

Feeling a little apprehensive—though I could not understand why—I walked through the alleyway toward the posts. I soon found out! Striking my hand against the post, as I walked though, I felt a pain shoot up my arm. I stopped and turned back to the posts, only to find a solid wall of concrete in front of me. In my panic I instinctively took a step back, right into the wall. Suddenly the two posts were there again. *Oh God*, I thought, *someone has removed the posts*. I would have to find another way to recognise my time warp from the other side. Undeterred and without hesitation I stepped back through the posts.

Sure enough, I was in a large car park. I was to find out later there were shops built above it. Looking around, I was pleased to see a No Smoking sign directly above my time warp doorway. Feeling certain I would be able to find my way back, I ventured out onto Edith Street. Shocked, I found myself in a large shopping precinct with high-rise shops and offices on either side.

There was no sign of the post office for me to check the date. Feeling completely lost and confused, I crossed my fingers and, hoping it was still there, I made my way to the library. Noticing a newsagent's as I walked along Bay Terrace, I bought a newspaper. Glancing at the date, I paid for it and gasped audibly as I read the year 2010. Concerned, the newsagent asked if I was all right.

