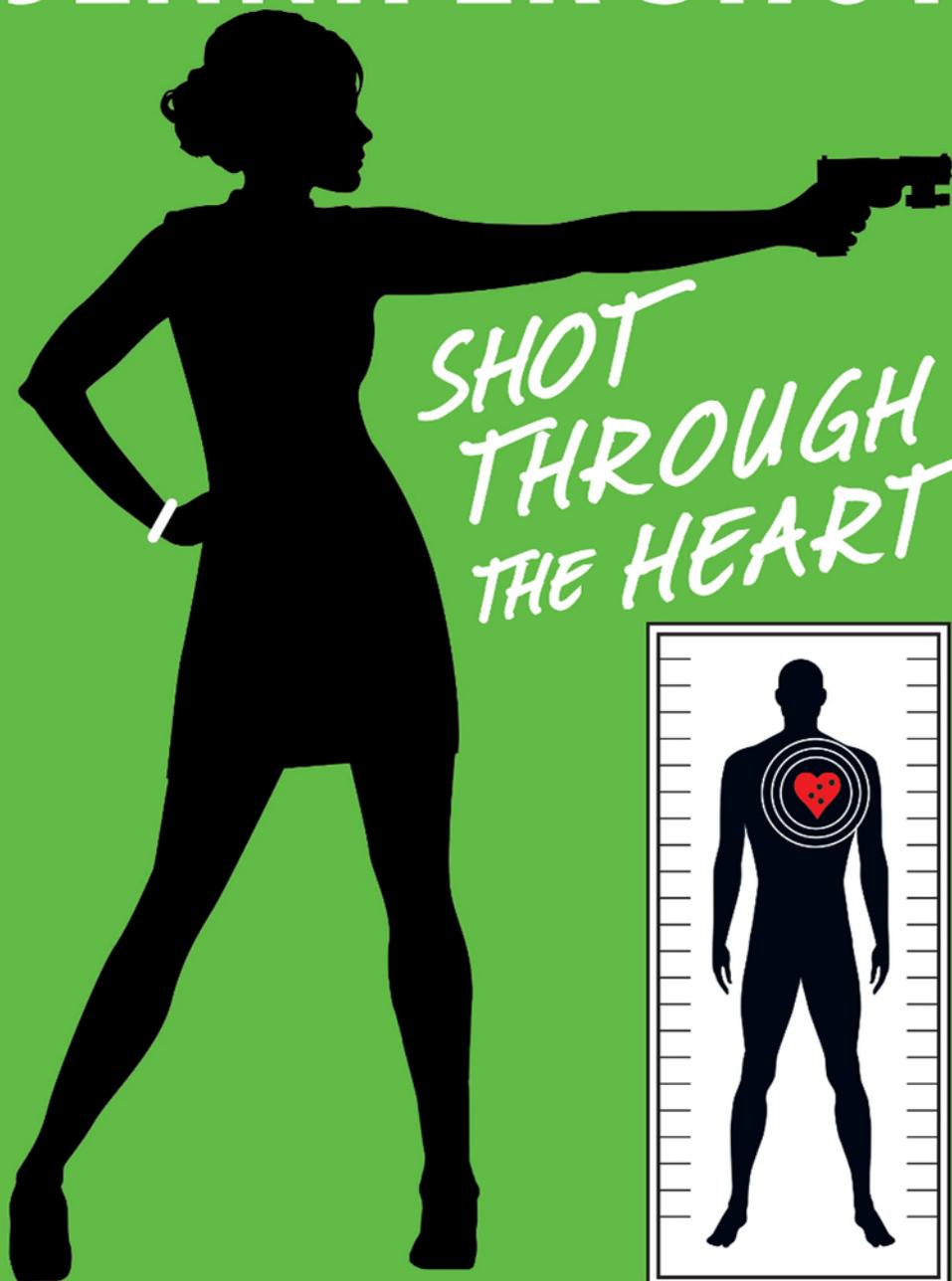


JENNIFER SHOT



Patricia Kristensen

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SHOT THROUGH
THE HEART

PATRICIA KRISTENSEN



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I dedicate this book to my husband Kevin who has captured my heart.

CHAPTER ONE

“White Pointer!” a voice yelled from the top of the lifeguard lookout tower perched on the pristine sands of Seven Mile Beach in Tasmania, Australia.

“There are two! Two White Pointers!”

A shark siren wailed its shrill warning to surprised swimmers and a voice boomed out of a megaphone instructing the public to leave the water immediately. Lifeguards moved the red and yellow flags indicating a safe area to swim, into a cross, and signalled to the few remaining people wading in the shallows to move up onto the beach.

I’m Jennifer Shot, and although I wasn’t in the water at the time the shark alert sounded, I was lying on the beach with my two best friends, Mary and Kathy. I was enjoying the first day of my summer vacation after end of year university exams.

I am studying law full-time and working part-time as a private detective at Shadow Detective and Security Agency, so I can maintain my Aunt Elizabeth’s historical home while she resides in an assisted care facility with her raunchy ninety-two year old boyfriend, Hank.

My aunt raised me from the age of thirteen after the death of my mother in a bridge disaster, and my father, who was a victim of a workplace health and safety risk. The risk was a biker called, Asshole. His name is self-explanatory. Asshole was a mob enforcer and my father was an uncover police officer with an eye for the mob

boss's girlfriend and a difficulty with keeping his baton in his pants.

Asshole sent my father on a scenic tour off the Derwent Bridge. Then Asshole went to jail where he discovered religion. So in different ways both, my father, and Asshole, found God. And while my father would never raise his baton again, Asshole became a master with the rolling pin in the prison bakery. Eventually, he was released on good behavior and for making tasty baked produce. He now owns and runs his own bakery, Jail Bake in the Huon Valley. It is renowned for its delicious pies and small French cakes; petite fours.

I have a brother Trent and a sister Tracey. They are ten and twelve years older than me, and were just starting out on their young adult lives when our parents went to sleep with the fishes. I went to live with my aunt.

Aunt Elizabeth is a war widow who resided in the quaint historical suburb of Battery Point, in Hobart. My aunt's husband, Uncle Ernie was run over by a tank in World War II. I guess he didn't see it coming. His parents were Hobart gentry by benefit of a land grant from the Governor of the day.

Tasmania was originally a British penal colony. It was the solution to their overflowing gaols at a time when stealing a loaf of bread or a handkerchief could get you hung or transported. The British government commonly offered land grants in Tasmania in the mid to late 1800's to free settlers to immigrate.

I enjoyed living in my aunt's house and stayed there until I left for a gap year when I finished my secondary education and arts degree at the University of Tasmania. I particularly enjoyed the turret on the second story of the house that afforded a 365-degree view over Hobart and out across the Derwent River. I spent many hours imagining myself as a princess.

My prince turned out to be a boy called, Jet Damon. He chased me into the girl's toilets in primary school and affectionately punched me in the arm. During my graduation dance at Saint Marie's Catholic Girl's College, he pushed my date into the bushes

and kissed me in the Holy Virgin Mary's Rose Garden of Contemplation. I was expelled from St Marie's and my aunt, who had become a devoted Catholic after Uncle Ernie's death, made me attend sermons about the evil of sins of the flesh.

Jet left for mainland Australia and joined a biker gang, the Hellcats, and then later joined the police force. He is now employed as a detective in Hobart's major crimes division.

Jet came back into my life shortly after I returned from my gap year, at the same time as my Aunt Elizabeth moved out of her house in Battery Point and into the Bellerive Bay Twilight Years Assisted Care Residence, following some dementia related escapades requiring police intervention.

My aunt lost track of names and began abusing Range Rovers. I don't blame her for being angry with large motorized vehicles; they had caused her grief in the past, but I couldn't have her wandering around the streets. It was too dangerous. So I took over the responsibility of my aunt's care and her house; renting out two rooms and the old servant's quarters to help make ends meet.

The old servant's quarters are occupied by another police officer, Cindy who is also Jet's partner at work. Cindy is six foot tall and solid muscle, which she developed working-out at the gym as a part of her anger management program. Cindy became a very angry woman after her marriage broke down and her husband took everything, including her beloved Harley Davidson motor bikes, and left. That was some time ago now, but Cindy is stuck in a man-hating phase; and I have to say that I've never seen anyone better at it. Cindy is an expert. Sometimes I even envy her. I wish I could be that good at something.

I rent two downstairs rooms to mature age law students, Rod and Nathan, who could best be described as scatterbrained man-whores. I share classes with Rod and Nathan and so does my best friend Mary, who returned to study after her marriage to a circus clown had an unhappy ending. After making a clown cry, moving on

seemed like the only alternative.

My friend Kathy is also at the University of Hobart. She is completing a master's degree in politics, but her true devotion is to finding a husband and a father for her unborn babies before the batteries run out on her biological clock. Kathy works as a part-time receptionist at Shadow Detective Agency and she works full-time at trying to make herself more appealing to the opposite sex. Kathy has tried many cosmetic procedures, performed for free at a local beauty training college, but they left her looking like a gold fish with partial facial paralysis. Thankfully, it was only a temporary transformation.

Kathy believes she is unlucky in love. The men in Kathy's past haven't turned out to be marriage material, and include a man with three nipples, a flasher, and a hit-man. Kathy's love-life is disastrous.

The same could also be said of Nathan's work-life. Nathan has caused a bomb scare, after leaving a suitcase in the toilets in a government building; hurled a flaming pudding onto the Prime Minister's table, when he worked as a silver service waiter; attacked small children, while dressed as a chicken; driven through a shed wall in a tractor; and dug himself into a hole in a cemetery, while working as a grave digger. When Nathan was employed, so were the emergency services.

My friends and family are a challenge, but I guess no one is perfect.

* * *

I looked up from my towel over the calm waters of Seven Mile Beach, beyond the swimmers assembled on the shore and I couldn't see any sign of a shark, nor could I ever remember any sightings of sharks on this beach. I glanced over at Kathy, who was sizing up one of the lifesavers, and asked if she could recall any shark sightings at Seven Mile Beach. Then I heard a familiar voice.

Kathy was unable to drag her eyes away from one of the

lifeguard's Budgie Smugglers. This is the nickname given to the small, snugly fitting bathers worn by lifeguards. They leave nothing to the imagination. Called Budgie Smugglers for obvious reasons, and if there were other reasons, I didn't want to know about them. I'd had enough problems with Parks and Wildlife involving a crazy black swan. In any event, whatever that lifeguard was smuggling; Kathy was buying.

"Is that Nathan?" asked Mary.

I followed Mary's gaze to a figure in blue Budgie Smugglers and a yellow and red lifeguard's cap. A small child, around the age of four was clinging to his leg and the lifeguard was appealing to a person beside him for assistance.

I sighed heavily when I recognised the two men. It was Rod and Nathan. I walked towards them and heard Nathan asking, "How do you get it off?" and "What do you do with it?"

"That's easy," answered Rod. "You find a group of other children the same age, then release it back into its natural environment. I saw it on a nature show. That's what they do with monkeys."

Before Rod and Nathan had time to put the small boy into a wildlife release program, a very shapely young blond woman in bikinis came running over and thanked Nathan for saving her son. I shook my head and watched and waited while she gave Nathan her phone number.

"Why are you dressed like a lifeguard?" I asked Nathan.

"It's my summer job. I've been employed as a professional lifeguard for the school holidays by the Bellerive City Council," answered Nathan.

"But you can't swim."

"My resumé says I can."

"You wrote that resumé. I've seen you in the water. You can float and dog paddle, but you can't swim."

"When I was at school I was in the water every morning at six o'clock."

“You were on the rowing team!”

“What can go wrong?” asked Nathan. “This is the calmest, safest, most protected beach in Tasmania. No one has ever required rescuing at Seven Mile Beach. Toddlers can swim here. And as it turns out, they are a good way to meet babes.”

“Are you nuts?” I exclaimed. “Look around you! The shark siren is wailing. The beach has been evacuated and two sharks have been sighted.”

Nathan dropped his eyes and said, “Technically, it was two White Pointers that were sighted.”

I regarded Nathan suspiciously. “Who called in the sighting?” I asked.

“I did,” said Nathan. “But I called it in to Rod and then things kind of got out of hand.”

“The White Pointers being?”

“A pair of naked boobies belonging to a topless sunbather lying behind the blue and white beach box over there,” said Nathan, pointing across the beach.

“Of course they were. Don’t you think you should tell someone that there are no sharks in the water?”

“I was hoping the situation would just blow over.”

“I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

“Sure it will. I’ll turn the siren off, uncross the flags, and everyone can go back to what they were doing.”

“Better tell that to the Coastguard,” I said, as I watched them motoring across the bay.

Rod was scanning the shore with Nathan’s binoculars. “The Coastguard’s out there alright. Someone must have called them about the shark sighting.”

“There was no shark sighting,” I said.

“Then why is the shark siren sounding and the beach being evacuated?” asked Rod.

“Because Nathan yelled out that he could see two White Pointers,”

I replied.

“Oh,” said Rod, as he turned the binoculars towards the blue and white beach box. “She’s still there and it doesn’t look like she’s moved at all.”

“Maybe she’s asleep,” suggested Nathan, taking hold of the binoculars. “I better check if everything’s alright.”

Nathan walked towards the topless sunbather and I sighed again as I envisioned him returning with another phone number. Then I looked around and took in the chaos that follows Nathan as sure as day follows night.

Panic and mayhem replaced the usual calm and quiet beauty of this popular sheltered bay. The Coastguard’s boat dropped anchor a short distance from the shore and two uniformed officers made their way up the beach as a high-pitched scream cut through the cacophony of noise.

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