

Victim Impact Statement of Melissiah for Louise Yvonne Faulkner November 2006

Dear Mum, it is incredibly difficult to put into words how I feel about your disappearance and death. The greatest pain comes from not knowing how you died and where your body has been hidden. I have tried to push such thoughts from my mind but they surface again and again without warning. This is my legacy since that fateful day in April 1980.

I find it near impossible to think of you now, or even look at your photo without wondering how you died. I imagine hands around your throat, violently crushing your airway and squeezing the life from your body. I imagine you gasping for air as you were held underwater. I imagine how hard you would have fought back, desperate to protect yourself and little Charmian. I imagine the sheer brutality of being hit on the head, shot or stabbed and your life ending so suddenly and unexpectedly. I wish I knew the answer.

I can only imagine the kind of scumbag who would have taken your life, considering your fragile state of health – an invalid pensioner with chronic bronchitis and in need of a hip transplant due to advanced arthritis. And I am beyond comprehension at how this person - this complete low life - has so cunningly disposed of your body so as not to leave a trace. I imagine you bound up and weighed down in the dark, murky depths of a dam, the cold water chilling your body to the bone. I imagine you callously dumped somewhere in the forest exposed to the elements. I imagine you buried far beneath someone's shed or house as if you were a worthless piece of rubbish. It hurts enormously that you have been denied the very basics of human decency after death – that of a funeral and a final resting place in a cemetery.

I have asked myself over and over. Why? Why? Why? I can only conclude that the person who has taken your life is a complete monster. A person with absolutely no conscience, no decency and no heart. A person motivated by pure selfishness. A person of the same mindset as a war criminal. A coward who to this very day, this very hour, this very minute denies me, my brother, and all of your many relatives and friends the answers. I am sure this person is a male. But they are not a man. They can never be a man. For a real man would never commit such a heinous crime and not own up to it and accept the consequences.

Mum, I often wonder if anyone else knows what happened to you. If so then such a person is no different from your murderer. Through their silence they condone your killer's actions and prolong my agony.

In the 26 years since you disappeared I have cried myself to sleep countless times. There have also been many, many other times when my grief has taken hold unexpectedly. I can be overwhelmed by emotion when I receive a flyer in the letterbox for Mother's day gifts, when I hear your favourite songs, when I meet someone who shares your name, when I see a dress that reminds me of what you would wear, or see someone with long dark hair. I never know when it is going to happen for time has not made this situation better. I miss you more with every single day.

It has been of utmost difficulty to accept the facts. I have never stopped hoping that someday I would receive a phone call or a knock at the door or perhaps see you on a crowded street. But through lengthy counselling sessions over the years and a virtually impossible act of reasoning I must conclude that I will never see you again. I will never see your smile, I will never hear your laughter, I will never hear your voice, I will never hear you sing, and I will never feel your embrace. I can only look at your photos and feel an overwhelming despair.

I now know the true meaning of the word unique. For there was no one like you and there never will be again. And while I admit that sometimes our relationship as mother and daughter was rocky and we had our moments, losing you has left a deep, dark hole in my very being.

I remember how beautiful your cooking was and how you taught me the importance of good nutrition. I remember how you encouraged in me a love of the arts, taking me to the opera and the ballet and sparing no expense in paying for music and dance lessons and art materials. I remember how you encouraged in me a love of animals, so I was helping to save horses, birds and wildlife from my primary school years. I remember you always acknowledged the help and support that the Salvation Army had shown you in your less fortunate times. You showed me to always think of those less fortunate than myself and give to charity. I remember you encouraging me to embrace the principles of the church and making me aware of the great sacrifices Jesus Christ had made in the name of love.

I remember how much you used to stand out in a crowded room with your personality, your striking beauty and your smile that would light up everything. I remember your great sense of humour and how much you loved being around people and making them feel good. I remember the value of life for you was your friendships with many wonderful and diverse people. I cannot fathom the reason your killer has used to justify destroying all this.

When I never got to see you for Mother's day in 1980 I realised that something was terribly, terribly wrong. Mother's Day along with Christmas and birthdays were so important to you. But with the rent accruing on your flat and uncashed pension cheques sitting in your letterbox we had to face the horrible truth and start clearing out your flat. Being only 16 years old I remember my emotions being in a frightened and chaotic state. I was told that we needed to keep all of your possessions for at least 7 years, as only after this time could you be considered deceased. I remember thinking that it wasn't possible that you could be deceased. I was lucky that your wonderful friends helped me through this traumatic period, cleaning up the flat, helping the police with their inquiries and promising to store your goods. I was confused as to why your boyfriend George didn't contact us at this time let alone help us with packing and cleaning.

I'm so sorry that I was unable to rescue your cats Snoopy and Cindy from the flat. I know how much you treasured your pets and how you always arranged for a friend to look after them when you went away for any length of time. I believe the person responsible for your death is also responsible for two more victims. Being a cat lover this has caused me additional pain.

My 21st birthday was one of mixed emotions. I wish you could have been there. Life was all such a blur. Seven years ultimately passed and there was no word from you or the police. I was deeply disturbed that your boyfriend George had not contacted me. Another year passed, then another and another and another. I remember how difficult it was for me, John and Rosalie to access your meagre estate through your will. I was shocked at the huge amount of paperwork and almost \$12 000 in legal fees required to release your estate.

The money I eventually received in 1992 meant that you were never coming back. But through my grief your generous character once again showed through with your bequests to the Red Cross, the Cat Protection Society and my grandmother Arline who you dearly loved.

George also received a bequest from your will. I became more and more troubled after he never contacted me, John or Rosalie. I continue to fear his reason for hiding.

Once you were presumed dead I slowly began letting go of your possessions. Every time I gave something away or sold something at the trash and treasure markets it was like an arrow piercing my heart. It was like giving away pieces of you. I can only hope that your books, furniture, clothes, shoes, records, linen, household goods, ornaments and material served to bring someone else happiness.

For twelve years I held on to your two wedding dresses. I reluctantly gave one to the op shop. The other I sold to a middle-aged alcoholic neighbour of mine who was getting married in the near future. I remember her

trying the dress on in my flat, her face beaming and her hands shaking with the DTs. Being a pensioner she could only give me \$20 for the dress. It all seemed so twisted and wrong – this was your dress but I realised you would never get to wear it. The hurt from this day is indelibly stamped on my mind.

I stored your Christmas tree in Grandma and Grandpa's garage for 21 years. I could not bear to even open the box. It has only been in the last 4 years that I have managed to set it up at Christmas and allow myself to think of the memories that Christmas tree brings back.

I kept all your poetry books. It gives me some solace to immerse myself in the same arts that you loved. I still have some of the Christmas and birthday cards you gave me. I look at them and try to feel happy but it does little to appease my upset. I have also kept the postcards you sent me when you went on a holiday with George to NSW. They offer me a glimpse of happiness that I only wish for your sake could have continued. You were about to begin your new life - your divorce had just come through and you were over 6 months pregnant with Charmian. I can only wonder what could have been. Your words on those cards talk of beautiful scenery and wildlife, watching the cricket late on TV, a donkey that I would have loved to see and the gifts you had bought for us. I can't help but choke up and cry when I read these cards.

To say that my life has been changed since you went missing is an understatement. For murder changes absolutely everything. I find it difficult to make friends and get close to people now. My greatest fear is that I could lose them as I have lost you. But there is also the fear that any friend I make could be capable of killing me. My health has also suffered immensely with periods of long depression and ongoing thoughts of suicide eventually leading to thyroid disease. I have failed to rid myself of this dark cloud that hangs over my head. I expect to be on medication for the rest of my life.

I am sorry if I let you down for not studying to become a doctor, as my grades at school suffered after you went missing. I hope however you're proud of me for finishing school and studying both science and music at university. For some time I had my heart set on a career as an international performer. Unfortunately however, I did not prove to be emotionally strong enough to handle many months away from home, family and friends. I believe this is a direct result of losing you and Charmian.

I have never held a memorial service for you as I have always held on to the hope that your killer would someday own up, someone would find your body or I would find your remains one day in the forest. This is looking more and more remote with each passing day.

When I go on a drive in the country and see an abandoned farm house or shed I wonder if you could be in there. I walk through a forest and see a mound of dirt and wonder if you're under it. Every time I hear on the news that a body has been discovered I feel a sickening sensation in the stomach. I always think it could be you. Thanks to your killer my life has all but been ruined. Countless times I have wondered if this person – your murderer - has ever been human enough to think about the legacy they have left in their wake. I very much doubt it.

Mum it is difficult to face the fact that I must continue on in my life without you. I have many years ahead of me, years in which I shall never be able to share with you my triumphs and tribulations. But I will continue my search to find answers and bring your killer to justice. I pray every night that the truth be set free, and that love will triumph over adversity, secrets and lies. I know you would do the same for me. It is the least I can do to say thank you for being my mother. And I hope that wherever you are now you may always know this - I love you.

Melissiah