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It was the first time Jinks Jenks had written an email to the police.

There was a lot at stake and not just the life of the missing university student. If the police took the information from the remote viewers seriously, there was a good chance he'd be found. And it would be a small win for her embattled research institute.

'Then let the games begin' she thought.

There were people who would love to see her fail and would make the most of it if she did. A success might lessen their antagonism. There weren't many supporters of the science of psychic experimentation, and nearly everyone had an opinion on it one way or the other. At least, Jinks figured, if a life was saved it would be ammunition to use with administrators who were so concerned her new institute might detract from the reputation of the university.

The pragmatics of the situation didn't dull Jinks' compassion for the student's plight. Jacques Renaud had only recently arrived from France to undertake a doctorate at the island's only university. Jinks could relate. Five years ago, she'd also moved to this island city to do a PhD, drawn here by the presence at the university of Australia's only working parapsychologist.

The tenuous link had brought her to this island at the end of the world. At first it was all charming, with friendly locals, grand old sandstone Georgian buildings, working docks and sparkling river that anywhere else would be called a harbour. The quaint city and surrounding suburbs were languorously folded into the foothills of a dramatic snow-capped mountain and every house seemed to have a five-star view.

But Jinks started to notice an undercurrent of violence. You could sense it in the agitated driving, the packs of tail-gating cars. Port Arthur wasn't far away with its brutal history and the terrible massacre.

Tourists seemed particularly vulnerable. There were recent unsolved cases where European and American tourists travelling alone had just disappeared. It seemed the visitors who came here for the food, wine and wilderness thought about spiders, snakes and sharks; not that humans might pose an equally insidious threat.

As she thought about what was in her email, Jinks glanced down at her desk where the front page of the day's newspaper shouted: FRENCH STUDENT MISSING ON MOUNTAIN. The article described how Jacques Renaud had been enticed here by the university's expertise in Antarctic studies; how he had secured a scholarship at the prestigious Southern Oceans Institute. According to the police, there were no known reasons why he would voluntarily go missing.

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The article filled in the details. Jacques was last seen leaving a drinking establishment in the Salamanca precinct on Friday evening after attending a function. He had declined an invitation to a party as he intended to go for a long hike on the mountain the following day. He lived in shared accommodation in a suburb south of the CBD at the foot of the mountain. His housemates had been away interstate and reported him missing when he failed to pick them up at the airport as planned on Sunday at noon. A CCTV camera had captured him riding a bicycle in the direction of South Hobart at 10pm on the Friday. There were grave fears for his well-being, but police hoped he could still be found alive. The article also mentioned that his parents were flying in from France and were due to arrive on Wednesday. A large photo took up most of the front page. It showed Jacques in a snowy setting, geared up for the weather. One hand held a thermometer toward the camera as the other pushed his hood back, letting his blonde curly hair spring free. He was clearly in his element with a close-lipped smile, his left eye caught in a cheeky half wink. Maybe he and the photographer had a bet on how cold it would get.

Not the type to do anything stupid, Jinks thought. But nor were the other missing tourists. He lived here, of course, though not for long. In the picture he looked comfortable in the extreme setting and Jinks questioned the current assumption he'd become lost on the mountain. It gave her confidence in the information they'd obtained using remote viewers that suggested he'd be unlikely to be found there. If they were right, he was in a small wooden structure somewhere near or over a large body of water.

Whatever had happened, she felt a pang that someone with such apparent enthusiasm and joie de vivre could be dead, just like that. It renewed her determination to get the wording of the email right. Something might come of it. Her gaze returned to the monitor. She decided to wait until Rod returned to get his opinion. Sometimes his other job – a more lucrative one as a locksmith – interfered with his part-time position at the institute, but they made a good team.

‘Alright, let's get this darned thing fixed’ Rod muttered under his breath as he started to work on the lock of a car door. He didn't usually talk to himself but right now he'd rather be back at the institute HQ helping Jinks. They'd been working together on the protocol for the past 6 months. It had been intense. They'd had to find the right people, refine the protocol and practice, practice, practice. Indications were good that the elite group they'd put together could now get information about situations when more conventional means failed. Now they were at the point where the critical information they'd put together might just solve a case.

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Rod realized how important it was for Jinks, the institute and of course for the missing student himself. And the family. He shuddered as he remembered the week he had spent trying to help and console his parents after his elder brother, Vlad, disappeared. Thankfully Vlad was found safe and well in Melbourne. Communications had gone awry and he'd had no idea they'd all thought he was dead as he spent a carefree week wooing his future wife.

He tried to focus on opening the door of the car parked in a clearway. Peak hour had started and angry drivers beeped their horns and shouted abuse as the owner of the car stood sheepishly on the footpath, briefcase clutched in both hands in front of him. Rod squinted as the last sharp rays of the winter sun shone directly into his eyes as it set behind the mountain. He jiggled the piece of steel one more time until he heard a click and the lock popped open. Instantly he felt better; the novelty hadn't worn off. Every time he managed to open a lock, however simple, he felt the same satisfaction as the very first time he'd found the hidden trigger.

'You're good to go' he said to the grateful owner who was already half in the door. 'I'll send you the invoice'. As Rod made his way back to the locksmith van he texted Jinks: [On my way back now, R.]

Jinks' phone chirped, breaking into her thoughts. She read Rod's text and was glad she'd decided to wait. The chair creaked as she swiveled around and looked out the window to see the mountain now turning into a dark silhouette as the lights of the city and houses in the surrounding hills flickered on. She got up, stretched and turned on an old 60s standard lamp in the corner. The overhead fluorescent tubes had been removed years ago and never replaced. It didn't bother Jinks; at least the old light provided a cozy glow to the scratched and worn wooden furniture. They'd had to make do with what they found when they moved in.

The office was one of five small rooms on the top floor of an old sandstone building which had recently been reclaimed by the university after years of neglect. It was part of an attempt by the new administration to regain some of the university's lost glory as one of the oldest higher educational establishments in the country. The first floor had been renovated and was now used for the grander university functions.

The upstairs floors had been left as they were found, furnished but unused for over 40 years. There were still books in the shelves, half filled forms in the in-trays, and even a bottle of now aged whiskey in an old wooden filing cabinet. The tea room had tea cups and saucers

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in the drying rack and neatly folded tea towels in the draw, all circa 1964. It was as close as you could get to time travelling and it suited the eclectic bunch of academics and admin staff it now housed; staff who didn't fit into the gleaming new health and science buildings or the corporatized admin structure.

The building was on a grassy hill on the fridge of the city. It looked out over a sweeping lawn and rose garden towards the docks area and the river beyond. Built in 1850 to house a Presbyterian boy's school it had all the features of a neo gothic structure of that era: tall thin arched windows and a multitude of towers and turrets. It had been taken over by the university in 1892 and the place was said to be haunted by a history professor who had slowly gone crazy and ended up barricading himself in one of the offices, fighting off an invisible enemy with treasury tags and rubber bands and then, tragically, taking his own life. Now there were stories about office supplies going missing and furniture moved around at night. Jinks didn't think there was much to the reports but it didn't hurt the reputation of her fledgling institute, which specialised in all things unexplained. She had focused her study on events that science says are impossible - things like telepathy and psychokinesis – events for which there was ample evidence but little understanding. Funding was scarce. About the only thing her field attracted, Jinks often thought, was invective and crazy people.

As she waited for Rod she looked once more at the email. The wording was one thing, but was the information any good? Was it correct? Would it help? She started to mentally compose the paper she and Rod would write up when the student was found safe and well, based on the information they'd provided. Then doubts starting creeping in. What if they ended up sending the police on a wild goose chase and wasted time and resources? What if they were right and the police didn't act on it in time?

The consequences of what she was trying to do were sinking in. There was a real person with parents flying here now, anxious and distressed. Jacques was out there right now, possibly in danger or in need of help. It was a long way from lab work or theoretical speculation, where there were no real-world consequences. She was glad to hear Rod's footsteps on the creaky wooden stairs leading up to the top floor offices. He opened the door without knocking.

'Hey'

'Hey'

'Sorted?'

'Yep'

'OK, so what have you got?' Rod asked as he pulled up a chair.

Jinks lent back and let him read through the email. She'd seen it enough times. 'Seems fine to me. Straight up and to the point. They'll either go with it or not. Maybe just

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say, 'Kind regards' at the end. 'Yours Sincerely' sounds so impersonal and old fashioned. It's 2014 remember.'

Rod sometimes thought Jinks had come out of another time and place. Her style was low-key and classic, and she had a self-contained confidence about her could make her appear aloof from the everyday world. Rod realized she had no idea some people found her threatening on this account, so he tried in whatever small way he could to protect her from them.

'That's it?' asked Jinks, her eyes seeming even bigger as she lifted her dark eyebrows.

'Yeah, the rest is fine. Just hope it bloody well helps.'

'Me too.'

Jinks made the change and clicked send. They looked at each other, crossed their fingers and laughed nervously. It was done.

'Beer?' Rod suggested to break the tension.

'Sure thing.'

It was out of their hands for now.

Detective Kenneth Woodside had just returned to his desk from a media conference when he heard the ping of a new email as it arrived in his mail box. He glanced at his computer and noticed it was from: jjenks@islanduni.edu.au. It rang a bell but he couldn't quite place it. 'jay jenks, jay jenks' he said quietly out loud, 'Now where have I heard that before.' He prided himself on his memory and liked to put it to the test. He also welcomed the distraction. The Commissioner had put him in charge of the latest missing person's case and they had made no progress today. They'd been looking up on the mountain since Sunday. Now, it was Monday evening and the family were flying in from France on Wednesday. Ken had one more day to get some good news for them. He'd witnessed the heartbreak of families dealing with missing members enough times already. The only good from it all was when the person was found safe and well and he could witness the teary reunion. In his experience this was the rarity rather than the norm. But this case was a bit different, the victim had no known enemies and no apparent reason to go missing.

Ken was already being hounded by the local and mainland journalists and knew that if they didn't get a lead soon the international ones would be swooping in too. The kid was the son of one France's most loved journalists and social commentators and it was likely to get attention if it wasn't resolved, one way or the other.

At last, he placed the name: Jinks Jenks. She was the one who had given that talk at the academy last year, the one that got her sacked.

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He'd seen her present a seminar to the latest cohort of new recruits. They always brought in an academic from the School of Philosophy to give them the run down on police ethics. It was more of a PR exercise than anything else, for the force and the Philosophy School. They both liked to be seen doing something practical to address the problem of corruption in the police force. The top tier of officers were expected to show up to give it some cred. The school usually sent someone fresh out of their PhD with a pre-prepared script – willing to do anything to up their chances of tenure. Usually the lectures made Ken yawn. It was all the stuff that looked good on paper but quickly fled out of the newbies' heads as soon as their feet hit the beat.

That time though it was different. Instead of the usual stuff, they'd been given a talk about how radical science could help them solve crimes in ways they'd never thought possible. Dr. Jenks spoke about how a protocol had been developed that had been used for over 25 years by the CIA and that it appeared, with a reasonable amount of certainty, that information could be found that should otherwise be unobtainable using what she kept referring to as 'remote viewers'. She reiterated that it still hadn't even been used once officially in Australia to even attempt to solve any of the oldest crimes still on the books. Why not? She wanted the audience to think. What if it could help? What is there to lose? He started to recall more about the evening, now over a year ago. When she first stood up at the podium she had tried to lighten the mood with a self-deprecating joke. It succeeded at putting them all at ease. She showed some nerves, but managed to be engaging and authoritative at the same time. He remembered she had a smooth round face defined by strong features: big eyes, dark eyebrows and high cheek bones. She wore a simple black dress, something that could have come out of a 60s catalogue, and her hair was pulled back in a pony tail.

Ken's police mind filled in the profile: 5 foot 5, medium strong build, dark brown hair, brown/green eyes. Then he had tried to estimate her age, it wasn't obvious, probably 30-35 at most. Reasonably fit. He figured she did enough exercise to pass the recruitment fitness test easily. As a naturally fit, wiry person himself, it was a measure he often used to categorise people. He realized it wasn't PC but couldn't help it.

Ken rubbed his nose as he vaguely guilty about how she'd been given her marching orders from the university when they'd found out how far she'd diverged from the approved talk. At the time he'd heard she'd been reprimanded and her contract terminated and he'd briefly thought he should send an email or something in her defense, but he'd never got around to it. There was the divorce, and the extra work load he'd taken on to take his mind off it. He'd also suddenly had his 5-year-old daughter to look after solo every second week. He'd quickly forgotten about the event until now.

Remembering all this had taken his mind off his troubles of the day and he idly opened

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the email. What on earth was she up to now? It was a university email address. Had she been reinstated? He felt his heart race a little as he loosened his shirt collar and brushed his black wiry hair back with his left hand. For a second he almost closed the email when he saw what it was about. 'Remote viewing' protocol. Missing person. Now what?

He'd realized her academic language was just a less contentious way of saying 'psychic'. And his heart raced even faster at he thought of one of his colleagues coming in and finding him contemplating the use of that to solve a case. He'd rather be caught reading porn, he found himself thinking, and wasn't sure whether to laugh or be disgusted. Curious and ashamed at the same time, he ended up shrugging.

'What the hell, can always ignore it.'

After checking that no one was around he clicked on the link. The encrypted email revealed itself and he started to read.

At the Hope and Anchor Rod squeezed himself into the cozy booth at the back of the bar. The place claimed to be Australia's oldest continually licensed pub and by the look of the furniture it could well be. Rod and Jinks liked the old dockland era atmosphere and the mixed clientele. You could find anyone there from hipster to hustler. It was one of their favourite haunts.

Rod took a sip of the pint of dark ale he'd got for himself and placed Jinks' on the table opposite him. He'd got her usual Seven Sheds ale, a local favourite, but where was she? Rod had come by himself in his locksmith's van as usual balancing his two part-time jobs; locksmith and philosopher.

It had made him a bit of an outsider in both worlds, but he was a good problem solver and an affable, natural charmer - that helped a lot.

'Thanks for the beer' said Jinks as she sidled into the booth, gratefully taking a long sip and enjoying the effect of the cool liquid after a long day.

'No probs, what took you so long?'

Jinks looked up over the rim of the pint glass. 'Outside the old Mercury building I bumped into a reporter. You know, the ambulance chaser dude, the red-haired one, I forget his name. Nice guy, always happy to share his info. Thought he might have some inside running on the search.'

'Any luck?'

'No. He thinks they've called it off for the night. Doesn't hold out much hope the student will be found alive. They still reckon he's on the mountain and it's going to be way below zero up there tonight.'

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Jinks and Rod sat quietly for a while, sipping their beer, one eye on the telly in the corner. Neither knew exactly what to say, both taken up with their own thoughts about what might eventuate if the information they had provided could really help find the missing student. They watched as the 7 o'clock news repeated the earlier media release. A clip of Constable Kenneth Woodside was shown reassuring the public that the police were doing their utmost to find the missing student. Anyone who saw anything should report it to them. 'Do you think?...'

'Maybe we should'...

Jinks and Rod both spoke their thoughts at the same time, expressing doubts that they should really just go out there and try to locate the missing man.

Jinks reiterated the assessment they'd already made. 'Where would we even start though? We really need to compile it with the other info they must have, and we can't exactly go breaking into every boat shed between here and wherever. There must be hundreds of them. Lets give the police a chance to get in touch. They might have additional information that can help refine the area. But if we don't hear by noon tomorrow we'll reassess.'

Rod nodded. 'Agreed. Better call it a day then'

'Yes, sir! Standing by'

They were both fans of schlocky old TV shows and often used the lingo from them as a way of lightening the atmosphere.

'Yeah, I doubt they'll make contact tonight, but you never know.'

'You want a lift home?'

'No, it's OK, I'll walk.'

They picked up their belongings and coats, left the pub and said their goodbyes on the street. Across the way, the fishing boats were bobbing in the docks, the lights of the buildings reflected in the water.

Jinks headed off across the road towards the water. Her apartment was on the other side of the docks area, up the hill from the Salamanca precinct where the row of sandstone buildings, once warehouses, was now a busy strip filled with pubs and restaurants catering to tourists and locals. It was in one of these that Jacques Renaud had just three nights ago been happily drinking.

The police officer who had fetched Jinks and Rod from the institute's offices had brought them into a brightly lit, badly painted room, furnished only with a table and four chairs, one

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of which had a broken leg. There was a crushed energy drink can in the corner.

Jinks couldn't believe how hackneyed the scene was. This was not how it had played in her mind when she sent the email. As soon as she'd heard the aggressive rap, rap, rap on her office door that morning she and Rod had been treated like suspects, rather than collaborators. The officer was clearly angry the police had called in people from the university. Even more so that he was the one sent to pick them up and drive them the short distance to the police HQ. It didn't help that Rod had pointed out they could just as easily have walked in the time it took the officer to negotiate ineptly the one way streets of the CBD.

The three now sat in awkward silence which was broken as Detective Kenneth Woodside swept into the room. He brought his usual wired up intensity with him, it was the sort of energy that made people jump to their feet in his presence. Jinks and Rod did just that.

'Dr. Jenks?' They shook hands.

'Yes, but just call me Jinks. This is Rod. Rod Volkov.'

'Sit, down, sit, yes, sit.' The detective waved his long skinny arms in the general direction of the chairs they'd just vacated.

Like two obedient dogs, Jinks and Rod sat back down again.

'Sooooooo' Ken took a good long look at them both. His impression of Jinks hadn't changed. She still exuded a quiet confident intelligence and though she looked a little out of her natural environment she didn't seem nervous or crazy, which was a relief. He made a similar assessment about Rod. 'I saw your talk by the way'. He raised an eyebrow in Jinks' direction.

'Oh, that was a while ago. A lot has happened since then'.

'Yeah, I heard you were sacked'.

'Well, yes, there was that. Now back.'

'With a vengeance?'

'Lets just say with funding courtesy of a benevolent benefactor.'

'Good. So, you're now doing what you said was possible in that talk. Trying to use psychics to solve mysteries.'

'Remote viewers, and yes, trying to get information that can help with cases like this one.'

'Psychics by any other name'

'If you want' Jinks couldn't believe they were stuck on terminology. She may as well be back at the university.

'Well, what have you got?'

At last, thought Jinks, as she reached into her well-worn leather satchel and pulled out the summary of information they'd put together. It contained small sketches and descriptions by the six remote viewers they'd asked to provide any information they could about the location of the missing student.

'According to the remote viewing session data, the student is alive but unconscious, in a

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small wooden structure near a large body of water. He was probably taken there against his will. The colours blue, green and yellow also featured in most of the viewers descriptions.'

'So specific.' Ken quipped.

'Point taken. But you see, if you can provide us with any other information you have we might be able to meld that with the remote viewing data and, if we need to, run more sessions.

It helps to know if there is anything in the first run that could match, then we can hone the focus down and, hopefully, pin point more precisely where to start looking. Make sense?'

'You want access to everything we've got so far? You know what you are asking? Every Tom, Dick and Harry rings in with where they last saw some bit of blue fluff on a tree up on the mountain. The information to noise ratio is off the scale. Especially now with social media adding to the mix.'

'Just give it to us and we'll see what we can do.' Rod was struggling to sound patient.

Ken pushed back his chair and took in the scene in front of him. Jinks and Rod looked like two keen puppy dogs to his jaded cops' eyes. Could they really help crack the case? He was intrigued and desperate enough to find out.

'Alright then. You've got two hours. It'll have to be on the QT though. You know what would happen if word leaks out Tas police have resorted to using psychics.'

'Remote viewers'

Ken let Jinks have the last word. He also made a mental note to find out what could possibly have motivated her to pursue these things with such intensity.

By noon that day Jinks and Rod had managed to sift through what Ken had put at their disposal: witness statements, CCTV footage, phone line transcripts, social media analyses. They'd found some correlations of possible sightings of Jacques later on the Friday evening and a remote viewer's impressions that he'd been forced into a red car on a road leading north out of the city. This was in the opposite direction of Jacques house and nowhere near the mountain. If he was taken in that direction the most likely place he'd be found would be in the boat sheds in a small bay further along that road. They were about the only structures that could match the description from the remote viewers and there was no time for another remote viewing session.

Jinks and Rod were arguing about how likely it was that the police would act on the new information when Ken, hurried into the room.

'What have you got?'

Jinks decided that there was no point beating around the bush.

'A Cornelian Bay boathouse.'

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Ken rolled his eyes ‘Where’s the dartboard? You expect me to get a warrant to go riffling through Hobart’s establishment’s boat sheds. What on earth makes you think we’ll find him there?’

‘The data’

‘The remote viewing data?’

‘Yes, some of it matched almost exactly one of the reports that came in saying he was seen out on the Brooker. The boatsheds are about the only structures close to that road which also fit the description of a colourful small wooden structure near water. You’d agree?’

‘I’d agree to that. Yes.’

‘Well, then.’

‘Well then indeed.’

Jinks and Rod were back at the Hope and Anchor just as the 7 o clock news was broadcast. It had been an intense day. There was nothing to more to say. As they sipped their beers quietly they both felt elated as the bulletin aired with the news that the missing student, Jacques Renaud, had been found unconscious but alive in a boat shed to the north of the city thanks to an anonymous tip off to the police.

As it ended, Jinks’ phone rang.

‘Did you see the 7 o clock news?’ Ken sounded as close to excited as he ever got.

‘Yes. Fantastic. He’s going to be OK?’

‘Looks like it. In a coma for now, but they think he’ll come round. He’ll hopefully be able to shed some light on how the hell he ended up there in such a condition.’

‘Well good luck with that. Let us know if there is anything more we can. And thanks for giving us a shot’

‘And thanks to you and Rod. Sorry I was a bit of cynical old bastard about it earlier.’

‘No probs. Til next time. Assuming there will be a next time?’

You bet. And Jinks.’

‘Yes’

‘This isn’t about your parents is it?’

Jinks’ parents had been killed in a light airplane crash when she was 11. They’d been found in the desert three days after the crash and there were indications that they’d been able to survive for at least two days.

‘Everyone’s a pop psychologist these days.’

‘Well, thanks for your help today.’