

Brian McAleer

BRAND NEW

EYES

- a short story -



Doug Hunter wrote the news for a living.
Taking facts and creating lies.
Now he wants you to see the truth.

Brand New Eyes
a short story by Brian McAleer

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With all the time in the world these days, I mostly read books but still found myself drawn to the TV. Call me hypocritical, but I think it had to do with my so called legacy, which was still unfulfilled. The time was six pm, so I turned it over to Channel Eight. The current cream of the crop for news programs was starting up, and I braced myself for the onslaught of bullshit they had planned for me. Cue the music; dramatic and over the top, accompanied by images of angry politicians, heavy traffic and buildings on fire, all whizzing past like dime a dozen disasters. And I suppose they were. The opening montage set the tone, and we zoom in on the newsreader. Sitting so upright you could sense the stick up his arse, and a perfectly pressed pinstriped suit. His “hair” if you’d like to call it, combed neatly to accentuate what little fluff he had left on top of his head, and a smile gradually appeared that was knowing and almost sarcastic. This was how I saw him, and I don’t know for the rest of my city, but I could also see right *through* him. Sure, maybe he was just a newsreader, but unbeknownst to most he was part of a bigger game, where ruthless men in expensive attires, never seen in the public eye, were no doubt watching from their boardroom in the levels above the news studio; watching the stories unfold to manipulate the minds of the many, chomping on their cigars and sipping their scotch. How do I know all this you might be wondering? I used to be one of them.

So how did I end up on the other side of the screen, watching in distaste. Let me tell you. It’s An odd story, and dare I say, you may not look at the news on TV the same way again.

Some time ago...

I had a steady climb from University into the media industry, as knowing the right people is always the best card to have in your hand. My uncle was a floor manager on various shows for Channel Five, and was a few years out from retirement when I started poking around the studio. I had gone in a few times before graduating for visits, and had a tour of the studio. Even met a few actors from time to time. To me, the studios of Channel Five seemed like a world within our world; a bustling place, where everyone was always in a hurry. Downing large cups of coffee, carrying clipboards, and looking fierce and determined. They seemed to know it all and looked cool to me. I wanted to be like them. I was young on my first visits; too young to be noticed by them, so I bided my time and studied hard.

Internships were on offer upon graduating, so I snatched one up pretty quick, with a little help from my uncle thank you very much. And for the first six months, was shadowing the big honchos of the Channel Five machine. Attending meetings, making coffees, revising their schedules, etc. But then, I got a chance to show my muster when the guy who writes the words on the teleprompter for the newsreader, had some technical error. He lost the words for about five stories that were needed for the program, and only minutes to type them up again. I was hovering somewhere in the background of all this, and said “I can help”. Having been in the production meeting

that afternoon, I recall the details of those news stories, and I was a fast typist, averaging 99 words per minute. So I jumped on the keyboard, causing some surprised looks from the *real* workers there, but typed up all five stories almost word for word as they had been written before. With just a minute to spare before the six o'clock news started, I "Saved the Day" so to speak, and got a couple of pats on the back. Word of this spread across the stage floor, and during the break the newsreader called my name.

"Doug, is it?"

I turned around, to see the man who brought Melbourne their news, Maurice Gibson, look up ever so briefly from his notes and give me thumbs up with a stiff arm. His body didn't move at all, like he was strapped to his chair, but his face said it all. A smile of perfectly white teeth, and lines that appeared on his bronze face showed me a true appreciation for stepping in and taking one for the team.

From here, things got better, and quick.

Five years passed, and I was a reporter in the field. Reading the lines written by the guys behind the scenes, I caught myself questioning what I was saying from time to time, but only questioning it briefly. It wouldn't help me to ponder on such things if I wanted to make a living in this business, which I did. So I put those thoughts out of my mind, and did what I was told. Little did I know, that tendency to question things wouldn't be silenced, and would come back to haunt me fifteen years later.

Old Maurice Gibson was nearing retirement, and I was in the running with three other blokes for the top job; Newsreader for the Channel 5 News at 6pm. And as I prepared for my series of interviews and video samples of reading the news from a makeshift desk, I was tapped on the shoulder by the man from upstairs.

"Doug, you're a great reporter, but when I watch you on camera, I don't see you staying there to be perfectly honest" so I was told by Clarence Hutchins, CEO of Channel Five. I had only seen this man at a few functions or in the corridors so rarely, I could count the times on my hands.

"Sir?" I asked, curious to hear his remarks.

"Well, hear me out. I don't want to stop you applying for the role of newsreader, hec if I was twenty years younger and better looking I would go for it. But believe me when I say – and let's keep this on the down low between me and you..?" he asked, then paused waiting for me to agree. I slowly nodded. "But the newsreader is only just the puppet. He doesn't have the power to decide what gets read. You've got the knack for that. And like any good writer knows, you have the most power when you can push the words across, know what I mean?"

I suspected where Clarence was going with this, but instead of assuming the offer he was about to make, I just continued to nod in agreement. This man had a way with words, delivered with a voice that was wise, old but still somehow modern, like he had travelled back in time from the future, and was finding delight in every word he spoke, like it was a prediction of future events.

"So join me and the boys upstairs for a cigar and scotch before you go home today. We've got a proposition for you" he said, and pulled an unlit cigar from the pocket inside his vest, winked and walked off. I stood on the spot frozen, watching this man walk onto to his next conversation, like ours never happened. In that moment, I felt an opportunity like no other was in the works, and I couldn't resist the mysterious allure

of it. Right enough, I was upstairs at 5.01pm, greeted by the smell of cigar smoke, and a young waitress holding a tray of drinks
“Scotch sir?” she asked, and I gladly accepted.

2

To keep matters brief, let me just tell you this meeting was every bit as mysterious as I expected it would be. Walking into a room I had heard about but never seen, was like descending deeper and deeper into the already deep world of the news business. A bunch of men, in suits that cost more than five of mine put together, stood in clusters of two or three. They all had cigars, glasses of scotch filled with ice, and spoke at low volumes. As I entered the room, led in by the waitress who greeted me before, I was met with stares. But they were warm and inviting, and as all the men in here were older than me, it was like being greeted by a group of dignitaries, who you were just grateful were giving you a glance at all. You know that being in such close proximity to their presence was a privilege, and I could bet only a handful of others from my level below had stood where I was right now.

“Doug” said the voice of Clarence Hutchins, appearing behind me and to the left. His large, warm hand slapped my back then rested on my shoulder. “Let me introduce you to the boys” he said, and I was led around the room, shaking the hand of every man in there, all of them with warm, firm grips. The names all sounded like classic movie stars, and I may have even heard a Humphrey or Marlon in there at some point. Then, standing in the centre of the room, the men gathered in a circle around me, and Clarence raised his glass.

“Doug, here is where the world is shaped. You’ve heard of the movers and the shakers right? Well, we tell them what to do. Some call us corporate media, but in truth, we’re just story tellers. We love a good story, and the more surprising and dramatic the better. That’s what the world wants, and that’s what we give them. And we’d like to offer you a chance to write those stories. Interested?”

The theatrics of all this were so much I couldn’t really comprehend what was being said, but I concluded it was an offer to write the news, or have some influence over those who did. And it would be in the company of these fine gentleman. This all seemed like a preordained meeting, and even though saying yes scared me, I knew I would regret saying no.

“When do we start?” I said, and I received a resounding applause. The rest of that night, even though it was one of the most significant turning points of my life, was a blur. I smoked my first cigar, thankfully well enough so I didn’t look like an idiot in front of the men who smoked three a day, and scotch after scotch was thrust in my face. I heard stories about my uncle, and each man who spoke to me had a face and eyes that were deeply knowing, and moulded from years of experience and wisdom. But not like the face you’d see on your grandfather, recalling stories from his youth; these men were different. They had crossed the line into this realm of power and persuasion, and relished in their own presence. I was captivated by it, and the mental images of my job on the levels below, which I still held just three hours ago, faded away. My life had changed in one evening, and could never foresee how much that change of life would corrupt me.

Coming into work each day for the next fifteen years, was very different from what the average worker would experience. As they sat in the slow crawl of rush hour traffic, I walked to work from my new city apartment three blocks away from the studio. As they dashed to be in by 9am, I strolled in between 9.30am and 10.00am. As they waited for their turn at the foyer's revolving doors, I walked in the back entrance and had the door opened for me. And in their levels of noise and tight deadlines, I had my own office, where I only had to write one news story a day.

In the first year of all this, something in the back of my mind bugged me. Did I deserve to be there? Was this right? But my questions only remained thoughts, as each day was a treat. My favourite kind of coffee was brought to me every morning by a beautiful girl in her early twenties. Kim was her name. She left the room with a smile; the smiles were soon joined by a flick of the hair, and a wink. One morning, she sat on the edge of my desk watching me drink my coffee. A year later, she went under my desk, and pleased me as I sipped my cappuccino. This was a regular thing.

Every year, my pay increased in the thousands, but for no extra effort. Slowly, the men I met on that first night, began to disappear, but there was no formal announcement or farewell party. One day they were there, the next they were gone, and no one spoke of it. I assumed they retired, got their payouts to keep quiet and enjoyed a carefree life on some island paradise.

My morning started with the day's news stories placed on my desk. I chose one I wanted to "Tweak" and gave the rest to the secretary. These were then circulated amongst the other men, all in their own offices with large desks, and beautiful girls hanging around. I was mentored by Clarence for the first five years, who liked to give me his two cents on the state of the world. He didn't have to say it, but he was moulding my mind to write a certain way. My words came across as mine, but with a certain twang. One of those stories, just to give you an idea as to what I was being paid truckloads of cash to do, went something like this;

THE FACTS: American soldiers storm village in Afghanistan with orders to shoot every villager on sight; women, children, everyone. They were witnesses to a raid on a hidden bunker in the village that contained the locations and security access to Afghanistan's secret oil refineries. The information was taken, and added to the "collection" of refineries the US government would possess and use as ransom against the terrorists to give themselves up.

THE STORY: American soldiers in Afghanistan discovered a village of slaughtered people, women and children among the dead. Arriving after Intel suggested the village was being used to hide wanted terrorists, it is believed they were aware of the army's presence and in a panic, killed all the villagers and set it on fire to cover their tracks. The soldiers then laid reefs in respect of the innocent women and children, and shared stories of how much it made them appreciate their family and way of life in America.

Cute, right? To put it bluntly, I received the facts, usually on a single piece of paper, with the words CONFIDENT written in red letters at the top. This was *The News* before it became the news, and I would write it in a way to protect the interests of governments, corporations and various celebrities. Don't believe me? I didn't believe such an act was being done until I became one of them doing it. And believe me, the concerns were in my mind, in the early days, but I was being conditioned by the older men in the expensive suits to write a different kind of news story for the man on the desk to read to you at six o'clock. And the beauty of it all? No one knew what I was doing, and none of this could be traced back to me. The original fact sheets were burnt after I wrote the story, and the perks of the job just kept on coming. I was offered anything I wanted, and we had private parties in the boardroom on the last Friday of every month; booze, women and drugs, although I didn't touch that stuff. I did find enjoyment in the ladies, and in case you're wondering, they weren't prostitutes. I would find out later, they were the daughters of the men in the suits. Talk about a fucked up kind of job right?

But I let my greed and addiction to comfort take over, telling myself it was okay. The news stories I wrote were just *versions* of the truth and if the public new the real story, they couldn't handle it, or wouldn't believe it anyway because it was so unbelievable. But the truth is always stranger than fiction, and for twenty years I took the truth – barbaric, cruel and malicious – and turned it into fiction, disguised as the truth. And if you listened to the news any weeknight over the last twenty years, hearing a story about a conflict in the Middle East, the actions of a politician, the cause of a celebrities incarceration for a mere thirty days in jail, then you were hearing my stories. I would never meet you, and it was at this point, twenty years into my covert operation of finding entertainment in daily doom, that I had my breakdown.

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It was after one of our monthly parties on a Friday night, and I was walking home. I rejected the offer from one of the girls to come home with me, and I only had one glass of scotch. Here I was, forty five years old, and I had nothing. I desired nothing, I felt nothing, and I came home to nothing. No family, no pets, just a picture perfect apartment, cold and alone. This tension had been brewing inside me for twenty years, and as I sat down on my couch, looing at my TV set, I started to cry. The set was off, and my reflection in the black glass, showed a man I didn't recognise. Kind of metaphorical really, seeing my reflection in the black abyss of a turned off TV set. Shrouded in darkness, alone and unrecognisable. I stood up, walked into my bathroom, and looked at myself in the mirror. And I mean, *really* looked at myself; into my eyes. I hadn't done this since joining the club. And for fifteen minutes, I stood there staring at myself, deep into my eyes, red and watery from almost a quarter century of guilt welling up. I punched the glass and broke it, cutting my fingers, and I paced throughout my house until five am the next morning.

I argued with myself, first as a mutter under my breath, and then I yelled. But no one would hear me in my apartment, on the second highest level, with only one other tenant down the hall. And he would be fast asleep.

“What the fuck have you done?” I yelled out. “How could you lie for all those years?”

I repeated these questions over and over, but no answer came back. Just the relief of finally confronting these questions after so long of ignoring them was good enough for me. I was completely unhinged, having taken off my expensive clothes, striding around in my boxer shorts. I swung my fists at thin air, and then began to laugh. I laughed, sarcastically then hysterically, and that's when I fell into a heap. Without being aware, I was in my bedroom and jumped onto my bed, landing face first. I lay there, arms and legs spread out and cried some more, burying my shameful face into the sheets. This went on for some time, as I saw the first glimpse of morning light creeping into the window. Then I feel asleep, and had the best sleep in twenty years.

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Waking up at 3pm that day, I felt completely changed. It was Saturday, and thank God I didn't have to go back to the studio that day. I had the weekend to figure out what I was going to do. I couldn't imagine returning to work on Monday morning, but realise if I didn't, the club would be asking questions. Their first thought would be, "Where is Doug? He better just be sick. If he's ditched us, we'll find him. And we'll make him pay" and that possibility terrified me. I didn't know what the men were capable of, but I'm sure it was bad if pushed to extremes.

I headed to the roof of my apartment building, which had a small garden and a great view of the city skyline. I stared at the buildings, cars and out at the world. Change was inevitable, and I knew I would have to face the music on Monday morning, and continue on with my work like normal. And for the sake of appearances, I would. Continue writing like I had done everyday, taking the facts and spinning them to bring you, the viewing public, the bullshit. The lies to protect the guilty and control the innocent, as it had always been done. But surely, others in my position had been were I was now? At their own 11th Hour, battling their conscience and faced with a choice. My choices were clear, but making one wouldn't be easy. So by Saturday night, after deep contemplation all day, I ordered in a pizza and wrote down a scenario on the back of the box. I munched on my pizza and smiled to myself, and on this night, I felt like the young guy in University again, and that felt good. I slept well again that night, and woke up bright and early Sunday morning. I got straight to work, and by nine o'clock on Sunday night, after twelve hours of writing non stop, I had my solution.

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Monday morning arrived, and I headed off to work feeling fine. The worry I had one Saturday about returning to this hoax of a career was no longer there. I just hoped I could look convincing that I was happy to be there. My usual routine unfolded and I was at my desk with a cappuccino, and a new, attractive young girl, hovering near the door.

"That'll be all thanks. What's your name by the way?" I asked her. The girl looked taken back by that, glanced down, then slowly looked back up at me.

"Rachael"

"Nice to meet you Rachael. Can I make a suggestion?" I asked.

"Is your coffee okay sir?" she asked with concern.

"It's fine, this is not about the coffee. I was going to say... quit. Get out of here. This is not a good place to work. You're a young girl with you're whole life ahead of you. And whatever they've told you about this place and the offers you'll get, it's bullshit.

Finish your day here, and then go. Things are about to change here” I said, feeling conflicted by my own advice; proud I had said it, but also paranoid how it could come back to me.

“Thank you” Rachel said and left the room. I didn’t see her again after that day, so I assumed she got out of there. If I could save one young innocent person from getting caught up in this sadistic place that was okay by me.

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For the rest of that week, I had to bite my tongue. I continued writing the stories I had done so before, but typing the words was no painful. I tried to keep the same tone as before, just to make sure things appeared normal. And on Thursday, a fact sheet came across my table that was brutally bad. It had something to do with the current Prime Minister at the time and the truth behind the shock exit of his Treasurer. I wrote my story for the world to hear that evening, but kept a copy of the fact sheet. This was going in as the last piece of gold in my secret project, started on Saturday and now almost finished. I would unleash it tomorrow, and follow that admission with my departure from the clutches of Channel Five.

8

An emergency meeting was called for 5.15pm on Friday by John Sampson, the replacement for Clarence Hutchins who had retired two years ago. John had been there when I started, usually standing behind Clarence, with a small smirk on his face. Years of waiting in the wings for the top job had paid off, and now he was calling the shots. He hadn’t been a mentor to me like Clarence had, but had no issues with my work. I got the occasional “Nicely done” from him, and that was about it. But now, he was going to do a lot more talking, summoning all the men into the main room, where there were no cigars or glasses of scotch, and a circle of chairs were positioned for each of us to sit down. John stood in the middle of the circle, and began.

“We have had a few surprises this week. Firstly, one of our girls left after Monday. She’d been here for six months, performed all her duties, and suddenly left. No warning, and no reason, that I’m aware of. And just today, two more girls didn’t show up for work. This is unheard of, and... unacceptable” he said, taking his time to look at every man in the room, and seeming to hold his glance at me for longer than the rest. But I remained calm and looked as normal as I thought I could be.

“Secondly, something else came to my attention, relating to one of the news stories of this week. And might I bring to the groups attention – Doug - ” he said, and my heart began to beat rapidly.

“– great work on your writing there. I wasn’t sure how we were going to wield that one about the Prime Minister, but you’ve saved his skin and he will be thanking us next month with a special package” John finished, and the group of men applauded. “My pleasure, sir” I said.

“And it is on that note, Doug, that your efficiency on this job, which has been seamless for fifteen years, be put to better use. All the men here know what I am about to say, because we met last night about you, and they all agreed you should be appointed to the newly formed position, of Lead Writer” John said clapping, and the men followed. I stood up, walked into the centre of the circle and shook John’s hand. “Let me explain. We’re getting older Doug. We’ve had our run. You are the future, and next week we’re bringing in three new guys, fresh out of their internship to join

us. And I want you to train them up. You should have a soft spot for these new ones; they're all about the age you were when you joined us. You're writing has been exemplary over the years, and we want to continue that quality of "Spinning the Stories" so to speak" John said, and the men laughed in succession. I smiled, but I felt like it wasn't convincing, so acted quickly.

"Of course, it would be an honour" I said, and John looked at me with strained eyes. "Good. I was hoping you would say that. Look in your bank account on Monday morning, there will be a surprise waiting for you. And get ready to mould the next generation. I expect nothing but the best from you Doug" John said, and the meeting ended.

Shit! I thought to myself. No backing out now. I had to launch my secret project. Things were getting out of hand here. And no way was I going to be responsible for destroying three lives as of next week and continue to fuel this bullshit ramble of a job. My conscience wasn't completely clear yet, but I had made a good start this past week, and there was no turning back.

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I had a busy weekend. First, I cleaned out my bank account, putting some of my fortune into a new bank account, and two lots of cash. I booked a flight for Sunday night to Sydney, where I would then buy a car and drive to Brisbane. Once there, I wouldn't be found, and I had to be sure of that. My special project was done, and I finished it off by writing this introduction at the start of it.

Dear Reader,

What you are about to read is unlike anything you've read before. I assume you're smart enough to know that the world is full of lies, and many of those lies come from the source you would like to expect is being honest with you. And I don't speak for every news publication or program, but in the case of Channel 5 News at Six, they are as dishonest as they come. How do I know this? I worked for them; twenty five years of my life dedicated to a news program that was privileged enough to receive the cold hard facts about the worlds events, then re-write them for your ears each evening. But it was all bullshit, and in this book you will hear a summary of some of those stories which were not all they seemed to be. And I hope you read to the end, because the last series of facts I will share with you will be hard to believe but it's important for you to you know.

My name is Doug Hunter, and my name is on the cover of this book. But as you read this, Doug Hunter will no longer exist. I would have moved on to a new life to avoid persecution and punishment. I hope you read this book with an open mind, and believe me when I say that everything in here is the truth; what I did was true, as hard to comprehend as that might be, and the facts I share with you of world events are also true, which is probably going to be the hardest part for you to accept. But like the title of this book says, "Brand New Eyes: Watching the News will Never be the Same" says, I want you to see the world with your own set of eyes, and turn off your TV.

Think for yourself. Seek the truth. And if you don't Believe it...Leave it!

Regards,

Doug Hunter

Former "Writer" for Channel News 5 at Six

The book was complete, and I kept it in electronic form. I uploaded it to a website I created, and posted an ad on Facebook which I paid top dollar for, so essentially every person in Australia with a Facebook account would see it. I kept the book free, because I didn't need the money, and I wanted everyone in my country to read this. For their own sake, and to finally put an end to the greed and corruption happening on the upper levels of Channel 5.

I pre-scheduled the Facebook ad to go live at 9.05 am on Monday morning. I wouldn't be at work that day, but I'm sure word of the book would reach the men in the expensive suits quickly, and they would act quickly. By that point, I would be gone, leaving behind my showroom apartment, with a backpack of a few clothes, a notepad and pen, and enough money to keep me going for about five years, if I lived modestly. And so, I put the project into effect.

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I arrived in Brisbane at about five pm on Monday. The flight into Sydney was a quick hour, and then I bought the car from the young girl in Sydney which I found on Care Sales for \$3000. When I paid her in cash she was over the moon. I stocked up on fuel, food and bought a CD at the petrol station. It was "Hit's of the 80's" and I relived the University days during the ten hour drive to Brisbane. I checked into my hostel, and after getting settled in, went down to the Hostel TV room. It was empty, and since it was almost six p.m. I turned on the TV and watched the news.

Being Brisbane, my Channel 5 news was only broadcast in Melbourne, but I wanted to know if word had spread of my little book on the web. My plan didn't disappoint, as the newsreader pleased me with the first story of the night.

"...And in the news broadcast world, the media industry is shocked by the release of a book on line by a former writer for Melbourne's Channel 5 News at Six. Called "Brand New Eyes", the book is a tell-all account from the writer about manipulated news stories and accounts of sexual harassment by female staff working with the board of directors for the station. The self-identified writer Doug Hunter, claims ownership over the book, revealing over twenty years of first hand accounts of falsifying events for the news program, and accepting large amounts of money to keep quiet. When contacted for comment this afternoon, Chief Executive Officer of Channel 5 in Melbourne, John Sampson, denied all accounts of any staff by the name of Doug Hunter having worked at the station at all. Other staff were interviewed, and the some long serving employees verified a floor assistant called Doug Hunter worked at the station as an Intern over twenty years ago, then left to pursue other opportunities. However, a twenty-two year old woman came forward this afternoon, asking to remain anonymous. She had a different take on this story..." the news reader says, and I watched in anticipation as the video reel cut away to the silhouette

of a female, being interviewed, her face shrouded in shadow and her voice changed to protect her identity. She spoke;

“I can say with all honesty that the book released online this morning is completely true. I worked at the station for a short time and was forced to perform sexual favours for many of the men who worked there, while I was being disguised as a personal assistant. But I was helped there, and told to leave before things got really bad, and I did, so I just want to say Thank You again to the man who helped me, and he knows who he is” she said, and the video reel returned to the news broadcaster.

“In her interview, the former employee of Channel 5 did not identify Doug Hunter as the man who helped her leave the media giant, but her account and this whole story, have been taking the internet by storm today, with many people expressing their own opinions. Already, the book has been downloaded five million times, and has made it’s away overseas, where news programs in the United States and the UK are beginning to report on it. Despite Channel 5 in Melbourne denying all claims put forth in the book, this story doesn’t look to be dying anytime soon. In other news...” the newsreader began, and I switched off the TV.

Sitting alone in the TV room of the hostel, I threw my arms over the back of my head, looked up at the ceiling and smiled. I’d done it. Busted that bullshit wide open. I knew I could never return to Melbourne, and accepted my new life as a free man. Sure, my money would run out eventually, but I knew things would be okay. Having a high paying job and nice apartment meant nothing to me if I couldn’t have a clear conscience.

I hung around in Brisbane for a week, kept a low profile, and then moved up the coast and settled in Cairns. There I found some work in a pub, pouring beers and listening to the stories of travellers and locals, and kept on listening. Despite my past actions, I still loved to hear a good story, and from then on, the only stories I was interested in, where the good kind.

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So there’s my story. I was just a young guy out of University, ambitious and keen to make it in the big time media world. I gave in to pleasure, greed and power, but all the while, my small amount of decency was enough to keep me questioning until the point where I couldn’t hack it anymore. And I took a big risk, exposing the truth of Channel 5, and the men in the expensive suits. Seems my book caught on in many ways, as three years after I released it online, things began to unravel for the news program, and the whole station was shut down. Other former employees came out of the woodwork, sharing their stories of getting paid to be kept quiet and fabricating the truth in favour for entertaining news. And as for the Prime Minister then, well he had enough pull to escape the truth that time, and remained in power for a further six years. He may have gotten away with it then, but I’m sure he now hides in his well-funded retirement days, haunted by his own past.

As the years went by, I felt less and less guilt about my twenty years of keeping a lid on things. And in my small rented house on the beaches of Cairns, I read books, and continue to write, posting things on line under different names. And I rarely turned on

the TV set. Until cursorily got the better of me one day, and I decided to give the news one last chance to try and convince me it was doing the right thing.

But in the ten years that had passed since my e-book hit the net, it seemed the aftermath had died down. Watching the Channel 8 News at 7, I listened to a story about a CEO laying off hundreds of workers and how he had to do it to save the company. But as the newsreader read her lines, I looked in her eyes, listened to her voice, and instantly knew she was lying. In fact, her words sounded a little like the ones I wrote, and maybe the legacy I didn't want to leave behind was still working. I begrudgingly accepted that the lies would mostly likely continue that way. But I would have no part of it anymore. I hadn't give up on my new legacy of telling the truth and getting as many people as I could to think twice, be willing to question things and be brave enough to act on that.

There would be no spotlight for me, awards for my book or letters of thanks. Doug Hunter didn't exist anymore, but my book always would. And my little shack on the beach and my job at the pub were small but simple enough to keep me happy, and unreachable. That's the way I liked it now.

I had my clear conscience, because after twenty years of telling lies, I had helped the world see through brand new eyes.

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