

Accidental Future

Mairi Neil

The crushed bonnet of the car outside the corner garage revealed a truth Amelia didn't want to face. Sombre brown eyes stared at the broken headlights, twisted grill and mangled fender, flickered over the cracked windscreen before closing as if preparing for meditation. *Stupidity must be my middle name!*

A pained expression turned into a scowl as she mulled over the previous evening and limped around the car. She tugged hard on the front passenger door, needing all her strength to yank it open. The creak of straining metal wince-inducing like fingernails down the blackboard. She grimaced, reeling backwards at the stench of spilled champagne from Adam's 21st celebration. The stained carpets and upholstery inside the Mazda smelt like The Homestead after the annual Bachelor & Spinster Ball.

She patted the passenger seat with her hand checking it was dry before easing her bruised body down and flicking open the glovebox. Relieved eyes glinted at the business envelope. *It's still here.* Who said there are no honest people left? She counted the wad of cash like a seasoned bank teller before stuffing the bulging envelope into her handbag.

Relaxed in the seat, she reflected on how life was good but her catering business must now stop. No insurance means no car, means no more cash-in-hand parties. She reached behind the seat and retrieved an unbroken bottle of champagne.

Plenty of people survive on the pension but she didn't want to just exist - she wanted to live with a capital 'L'. After a struggle she extricated herself from the damaged car clutching the bottle to her chest. The pause triggered several subliminal flash replays of the crash. If she hadn't swerved to avoid the large kangaroo she wouldn't have hit the tree sapling and ended in the ditch.

Thank goodness country life also has pluses! Paddocks separated the main road and Adam's party offering a clear view. Rescue almost instantaneous with Adam's family and several guests beside her within minutes.

A slow smile transformed Amelia's pensive face and her mood lifted. Adam's widowed granddad visiting from interstate seemed interested in her at the party - and he was loaded. She recalled his sympathetic concern, the gentle arm around her shoulder.

What was it her horoscope said this morning about clouds and silver linings?

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