

The Venue

There was a gold sign, glinted with rust and red dust, drilled into the bricks of this particular building. The sign's corners, sharp yet blended via shade and wear into the dark brickwork, defined the building's uncertain potential to bestow stability and equipoise upon its users. The solid brickwork was attached to the rest of the terrace building, and it was not unlike the others in the street several away from the town's centre; but it was set apart from the row of terraces lining the country town's street only by this sign, and you needed to be standing at the doorstep to read through the pecks of corrosion, to gain understanding of its purpose: The Venue an Ecumenical Therapeutic House (A Division of the Catholic Diocese of the Riverina Region NSW).

The bucolic Venue was unhinged in places, particularly around the window frames, somewhat careworn around the wooden paintwork that sat chipped, holding the glass specked in rural soil. The terrace could be read as character-filled and lovely via these features, or it could be called ugly and unattractive. In the time of its present, there was little evidence to say what many, preoccupied with other definitions of the world, really thought or gained from its physical appearance, but it was currently occupied by a small group from varying walks of life, exuding therapy only upon those in a discerning position to benefit from its particular designs.

The Venue sat in the street within the reasonably large rural city of the greater province. The provincial conglomerate was currently surviving on drought-filled cattle and scanty grain in its surrounds, while its interior rattled sufficiently on the cog wheels of the Supercentres and Marketplaces, selling universal wares and states-of-mind to the irrigated aridity. Comparative to the ongoing bustle of a large metropolis, the commodities purchased removed individual states-of-mind from the drought, allowing the provincial psyche to focus its energies away from the desert-dry that gave mortality breath. Such material acquiring enabled many from the region to focus on something elusive yet concrete, and most certainly less depressing: there was a much slower rhythm here, compared to the psyche found in the larger, more important cities; as the countrified traffic wound its way towards the marketplaces, there went with it an unseen but obvious collective memory to gain something other than devastation.

Not long into this slow rush of the Venue's road close to the Centre, one car not native to the region west of the Dividing Ranges showed promise of pulling into the space outside it. It eased itself down and pulled into the gutter carefully, marking time with the building's hazy structures.

Inside the car, caressing the neat curb with sweet precision, Lee Harmony now perused his notes unaccompanied. The visitor, reading, could best be described as a conglomeration of achievement in the workplace, but belonging to a singular, perhaps undervalued profession. He was from a more important region of the country, east of the Ranges, and he was looking over the most recent details of two souls presently staying inside. It was not long before these

particular souls inside The Venue would be released from the demi-watchful eye of the ecumenical spirit of caring, perhaps with referral letters and prescriptions for various medications. The latter point mostly and likely showed the cerebral anguish behind the need for spiritual salvation, but salvation from what was ill-defined. Lee Harmony perhaps secretly accepted the need to return these souls to a traditional form of God, which might help explain his current existence at such a place as The Venue. The particular man inside the car might have supported such centres of the Venue's like, finding them necessary, which could define his role at the place. Precisely for what others found places like this necessary might have been entombed amongst a devotion to a scientific form of God, justifiably sounded amongst the physical structure of all energy and matter having some understanding of the Divine. If this were the case with Lee Harmony, however, what he thought beyond this was not with abundant clarity, as his belief was satisfied to the point of having no need to evangelise or discuss the topic at most times, which meant there was presently no chance of it being challenged too.

Lee Harmony's academic thumb was presently stopped on his notes at one very familiar name in particular, and it sat there near it before he brought his head up and stared back up at the building. As it was morning, Peta Hearn would just be waking up, likely getting ready for their first Nutritive Therapy session for the day, which she seemingly disliked as there were certain aspects she sometimes contested. Included on his notes was a list of Peta's diagnoses that began in the public hospital where he'd first met her after voluntary admission as depression some months ago, but was in contrast to what was officially recorded now as she spent her moments at the Venue. Quite different from the original report, it showed the patient was merely suffering from exhaustion, anxiety and stress, and Lee curatively considered her mental state. He had perhaps found a Christian-type willingness to be there for her, as there wasn't much else that a Doctor of Dietetics, with a Bachelor's in Clinical Psychology, in addition to other Degrees as such, who was merely conducting research, could do.

On Lee's notes, another name stared out at him, appearing bolder or fatter, notwithstanding the fact it was presented in the same hand type as the other names, and in spite of its lexical opacity. This particular name encrusted inside his head was that of a man who was likely undergoing a very short period at the Venue, a man adversely – so it said – and economically affected by the drought. Lee wondered about his future pursuits given the irreversibility of the situation, and had encountered and therefore assisted in making arrangements, so the man could potentially move forward with selfless direction. It was apparent that a newer and empathic occupation would assist this individual with a manner of living to compensate his current lack, and Lee appeared eager to tell him his shifting could be effective from today, if he so chose.

The academic Doctor Harmony, who was undergoing journal publication research into the effects of healthier lifestyles on various clinical disorders, finally opened the door and stepped out. When he walked with slow, deliberate purpose to the front door with the rusty sign peacefully drilled there, he appeared to be wondering what his research would have in store for him today;

one could surmise he was privately keen to get into it, and had been looking forward to it since he left The Venue yesterday evening.