

THE STORY SO FAR

You are a group of mercenary couriers. It's June 2096 (or 2094 if you ask anyone from Borden). You were on your way to Borden – de-facto capital of the Independent Settlements – to deliver a cartload of goods to Greene's Emporium. On your second night on the road you camped at the ruins of an old caravan park just behind the Stirling Ranges.

Here you discovered the body of a young man, apparently killed by raiders. On examining his effects you discovered he was one Jacob Browning, an Assistant Librarian at the Borden Library. You also discovered a number of stolen library papers hidden in his boots and a set of pre-war military dog tags around his neck.

You took the body to Borden where you completed your delivery and were paid in cash and goods. You were contacted by the head of the Borden Engineers and Head Librarian Adams who employed you to stay around for a few days and help investigate Jacob's death.

Investigations in Borden revealed the following.

- Jacob was 28 years old. He was an orphan who was taken in by the Library after his parents were killed by the Satellite Plague in 2066. He was thought to have no living relatives, but discovered an Uncle in Albany five years ago. He has taken time off to visit him every six months or so since then, and left on another trip only a few days beforehand.
- Jacob was an adequate although unremarkable librarian. In his personal life he was something of a loner who didn't get on well with others. He had only one good friend (Steve McKenzie) who works at the local stables. Steve described him as smart when he wanted to be, but always coming up with grandiose plans and never following them through.
- Everyone describes Jacob as a bit of a loser. He was always trying to impress people and make himself look big – usually unsuccessfully. When he had money (usually after coming back from visiting his uncle) he'd splash it around at the bar, shouting everyone on behalf of "Uncle Al".
- Jacob was interested in Melissa Baxter who works at the town radio room. He kept bringing her gifts (chocolates, jewelery etc) – some of them quite expensive – but she never accepted them because she wasn't interested and didn't want to give him the wrong idea. One time he bought her a box of thermionic valves – she insisted on buying them from him. He said he got them from his Uncle Al. He also said she should come and visit him in Spencer Street (in Albany) and one time made a point of showing her his dog tags – implying that they were important but refusing to say why. He was "pretty smashed" at the time however.
- Jacob's personal effects included a brochure for the Whaler's Cafe in Spencer Street Albany. A loose wall panel in his room at the Library revealed a number of

papers and documents missing from the stacks.

When you report this information to Head Librarian Adams he thanks you and pays for your trouble. He then asks if you could do a number of further jobs – locating Jacob's uncle and informing him of his nephew's death, and seeing if you can find out anything about his document thefts. Reasonable costs incurred will be covered by the Library, and he requests regular updates via reverse charge radio telegram.

You head south for Albany. At Chester Pass in the Stirling Range you are ambushed by a well armed group. In the subsequent firefight you manage to kill two of them – the others retreat and escape on horseback. The two killed are wearing dog tags similar to Jacob's.

Continuing south you spend a night at a Rangers' Station and report the incident. The next night is spent at Porongurup and you arrive in Albany on the evening of Tuesday June 16th.

WEDNESDAY 17th JUNE

On Wednesday morning you check with the Rangers about your report. Your attackers were followed westward for about half a day before they turned onto an old sealed road and their tracks were lost. General opinion is that they were a well organised group of raiders who were setting themselves up to ambush travelers along Chester Pass road. No one recognises the dog tags, or can tell you anything about them.

You proceed to the Whaler's Cafe on Spencer Street. It turns out to be right next door to a small hotel, the Sandfire Guest House. Both are fairly run down and grimy. The proprietor of the Cafe recognises Jacob from his photo, saying that he stays at the Sandfire every six months or so and would meet with a tall, dark haired man in the cafe. The man was actually there a few days earlier - he hung around for an hour looking at his watch before a messenger arrived with a telegram, which he read, then left.

You go into the Sandfire where the man behind the counter is extremely unhelpful. He refuses to provide any information and threatens to call the Rangers to have you thrown out. You leave before causing any trouble.

Enquiries in the local area reveal that the Sandfire is regarded as fairly disreputable. Many shady and criminal types stay there and there have been occasional raids by the Rangers looking for criminals and fugitives. The owner of an electronics shop a few doors down remembers Jacob coming in six months before and buying \$500 worth of thermionic valves – he didn't seem to care what type they were which the owner thought was strange. No one in the area has heard of "Uncle Al".

You decide to visit the Southern Union Telegram company to find information about the telegram delivered to the man at the Whaler's Cafe. The manager is reluctant to provide information until you explain the situation. He then looks up the log books and told you that the telegram was sent to a Mr White at the Stirling Hotel – apparently he wasn't there and the messenger was re-directed to the Whaler's Cafe. He refuses to provide any more information (such as the text of the telegram) without authority from the Rangers.

You leave, then send a telegram addressed to Mr White at the Stirling Hotel. At the hotel you wait for the messenger to arrive (a Lionel McPhearson) who (for a small bribe) provides you with the text of several telegrams he's delivered to Mr White over the previous week – the last one only yesterday. Unfortunately they're all in code. He describes Mr White as tall, very well dressed and with dark hair, but has no idea if his first name is Al or Albert. In return for another bribe he promises to let you know if he delivers any more telegrams for Mr White.

You send a telegram to Librarian Adams reporting your progress and requesting assistance with the codes, and return to your lodgings for the night.

THURSDAY 18th JUNE

In the morning the paper reports an incident at the Sandfire Guest House – persons unknown kicked down the door during the night and stole the guest register. A resident (Anzac Cartwright, aged 68) was brutally killed by a blow to the head when he interrupted the thieves. You go to the Rangers and explain your involvement with the Sandfire and the mysterious Mr White in the hopes they'll let you examine the crime scene. They don't – instead they thank you for your information and say they'd contact you if they needed anything else.

Shortly afterwards you spot a teenager wearing dog tags on the street. You confront him, and the terrified teen indicates that they're the latest fashion and he'd bought them from Gibson's Store on Grey Street. At the store Mr Grey explains that he bought a bunch of them from a Scav by the name of Tegwyn Jones about eight months ago and had the idea of selling them to the kids as a fashion item. He also mentions that Jones had dropped around and sold him another load only an hour before.

You manage to find Tegwyn on the road north out of town. When questioned he says that he found a crateload of tags in a military facility in the Radlands. He examines the tags you salvaged from Jacob and the raiders and informs you of the following.

- They're not from the crate of tags he found.
- They've been manufactured to look authentically pre-war, but are modern fakes made from sheet aluminium and solder.
- The solder is unusual – it's not pure lead, possibly because that would make the tags heavier than the real ones.
- The numbers and letters on the tags have been stamped with metal dies, rather than laser etched as on the originals.
- The work is of such quality that it would have been extremely expensive and there's only four or five metalworkers in the States who could have done it. Two of them are in Albany - Millard Barnett and Bec Floreat.

He provides you with their addresses before continuing on his journey. Floreat is closer so

you decided to visit her first.

On the way you check for a reply telegram from Librarian Adams. He has replied and directs you to Mordecai's Letters and Messages – a business that does reading and writing for those unable to, with a sideline in encryption and decryption. The proprietor – Lynton Mordecai – has worked with Adams before and takes on the job of trying to decode the telegrams as a personal favour to him, refusing payment except for a bottle of Dog Rock Bitter. He says it will probably take a few days, if it's possible at all.

You continue on to see Bec Floreat who claims not to have made the dog tags. She examines them and says the solder is a lead/silver alloy, which would be extremely expensive – the only sources for silver are old jewelry, old cutlery and some old electronics. In her opinion the only other person in Albany who could have made them is Millard Barnett, who has done some work with aluminium and silver before. She says she'll ask around her suppliers to see if he's been buying silver recently.

Enquiries with her neighbours suggest that Floreat is a trustworthy businesswoman. No one recognises the description of Mr White.

You go to see Millard Barnett. His home/workshop is locked up. A sign on the door directs enquiries to the building firm next door. Here the proprietor tells you that Barnett had to leave suddenly on Tuesday night – his sister in Windy Harbour is seriously ill. Barnett was in a real hurry, he didn't even have time to speak to him, and sent a kid with a note instead. When asked about the kid he describes him as about 12, wearing a beaten up old whaler's jacket that's too big for him, and with a real attitude. He also says he didn't know that Millard even had a sister.

You head back to the telegram company to see if any more messages have been sent to Mr White. Lionel isn't there, so you head back to the Sandfire Guest House.

Here you bluff the manager into thinking you're working with the Rangers, who have been crawling all over the place all morning. He lets you into the room Jacob always rented. A search produces a half empty bottle of whiskey, and a crumpled piece of paper reading "54 Sussex Street – 5 o'clock". You question the manager about Jacob, but he becomes suspicious and you decide to make a tactical withdrawal before provoking him further.

It is now evening and you buy dinner at a cafe on York Street. As you're leaving the city's fire cart rushes by. On a hunch you follow it to Millard Barnett's house, the back portion of which is on fire. The fire fighters put out the blaze, but not before the building is badly damaged. With the fire fighters watching the property there's nothing you can do except go back to your lodgings.

FRIDAY 19th JUNE

You get up early and head over to Mordecai's Letters to see if the telegrams have been decrypted. Mordecai's says he's working on them, with help from Adams, but it will be a while. Next you check with Bec Floreat. Millard had been buying silver recently, but there wasn't much around. A lot of it seems to have been bought up by dealers from the western

states over the last few months.

You visit 54 Sussex Street – it turns out to be an empty lot. You then make contact with Lionel McPhearson who says there have been no more messages for Mr White.

You head for Barnett's place. On the way you spot a street kid in a large whaler's jacket matching the description given by Barnett's neighbour. He runs, but you manage to catch him. His name is Harp and he implies that he delivered the note, but is too hungry to remember any details. Once supplied with a pie from Kingman's Bakery he says that he was approached by a man matching Mr White's description who payed him to deliver the letter and say it was from Millard Barnett. He supplies some additional details - the man was very well dressed, wore riding boots and leather gloves, and was trying to hide a D'Entrecasteaux accent. Harp is familiar with Barnett, and this man wasn't him.

You go back to Barnett's place and sneak around the back. Entry into the damaged building is fairly easy, but the structure seems very unstable. The front room is a metal workshop – a search turns up some pieces of aluminum, some fragments of silver wire and (under a bench) a die punch of the number 9. It's an exact match for the nines on the dog tags. Further exploration upstairs is abandoned when the floor proves too dangerous.

In the backyard you find the source of the fire. A large bonfire seems to have been lit, then left to get out of control, spreading to the house. Sifting through the ashes finds many shreds of burnt paper. The only legible piece bears the gold embossed letterhead of “The Blackwood River Water Company” and seems to be some kind of invoice for metalwork involving aluminium. It is too fragile to take with you.

You head to the Central Business Register to look up the Company. It's just on closing time but you convince the clerk to give you five minutes. You find that the company is incorporated in D'Entrecasteaux, with it's head offices in Manjimup (12 Brockman Street), and it is planning to lay a water pipeline to the Blackwood river. The managing director is one Edward Anthony.

SATURDAY 20th JUNE

The next morning you return to Mordecai who thinks he may have found a way into the encryption, although he hasn't broken it just yet.

You send a telegram to Librarian Adams informing him of your progress and discuss what to do further. Concluding that the evidence seems to be pointing towards D'Entrecasteaux you decide that you should head west. You make enquiries at the harbour about finding working passage on a ship, and for security escort jobs at the inns around Weerlara Junction. You end up finding a trading caravan to Manjimup that will hire you for \$250 each, leaving tomorrow. The journey will take six days.

That afternoon Mordecai contacts you with translations of the telegrams (see below). You decide to take the caravan job and prepare to depart in the morning.

AND SO WE COME TO THE PRESENT . . .

It is now the evening of Wednesday the 24th. The caravan has been on the road for an uneventful four days. Winter is setting in and there have been numerous rain showers, by the end of the week sleet is expected on the south coast - you're glad to be heading north.

You spent last night at an inn in Walpole, the capital of Frankland State. It's now dusk, and you're just pulling in to the usually crowded camping grounds at Pingerup Lakes. This late in the year there are only a few caravans and travelers staying the night, but there are already a few bonfires lit.

Tomorrow you expect to arrive in the border town of Shannon and (after the usual lengthy Customs and Excise assessment) spend the night. On Friday morning you'll pass into D'Entrecasteaux, and arrive in Jardee in the early evening, where you'll receive your pay. You'll be welcome to hitch a lift into Manjimup the next morning, but your employment is officially at an end.

For now there's a good night to be had swapping stories, comparing scars and passing bottles around the fire with other traders and travelers. Pingerup Lakes is always good for news and gossip, so you might want to ask around about the mysterious Mr White...

DOCUMENTS DISCOVERED ON JACOBS BODY

1. Pilbara Rainfall Map, Winter 2002. Issued by Department of Land Administration.
2. Route 96 Transperth Bus Timetable, issued July 1999.
3. Brochure from Main Roads Department talking about roadworks in somewhere called Maddington.
4. Some kind of magazine cover ('Landscape') with a weird looking map of the Southwest on it. The ocean is black, the land is a weird patchwork of reds, greens and greys (identified as a satellite photograph).
5. Faded postcard showing a clock tower on a bright green lawn with shiny new cars parked in front of it. The printing on the back is too faded to be read.

TELEGRAMS DECODED BY LYNTON MORDECHAI

Saturday the 13 - Delivered to the Whalers Cafe

WHITE. ALEX INTERCEPTED AND DECEASED BORDEN ROAD. THOR 5
DISPATCHED. STAND BY. LYONS.

Monday the 15th – Delivered to the Stirling Hotel

WHITE. THOR 5 COMPROMISED. STIRLINGS. 4 MALES. HEADING SOUTH.
STAND BY. LYONS.

Tuesday the 16th – Delivered to the Stirling Hotel

WHITE. 4 M SIGHTED ALBANY. INITIATE CLEANUP. GATHER
INTEL/COMPROMISE WHERE POSSIBLE. LYONS.