

## CHAPTER 15

### Ruminations

“Come on Cate,” said Liz. “Let’s sit down and see what we can make of these clues. We need some paper and a pencil.”

“In Tom’s map case.”

“The *chart* case, Cate, the *chart* case.”

“Yes. The chart case. And we’ll need the maps, er, charts too.” They fetched Tom’s map case and took it into their tent where they sat one at each end.

“Now let’s spread them out.” They unfolded the maps and spread them out side on so they could each read them.

“Liz there is a *huge* area to cover,” said Cate despairingly as she gazed over the assembled maps. “It could be anywhere on these six. Anywhere from Karuah to the top of Myall Lake.”

“Here’s the Gold Cup list.”

“Let’s go through all the clues again and write them down.”

“Right. Now, starting from Snapper Island.”

“First clue was an N.”

“Then at Boondaba Island?”

“Five.”

“Corrie was an S. Rooke another S.”

“Chinaman’s Knob, another S.”

“The Shack was an O, or zero. And Bulahdelah Point a W.”

“Mark took the Morse from Yacaaba Head on Rooke Island and that said Yacaaba was an N and Barromee Hill an H.”

“Then the Morse from Broughton Island.”

“Where is that list you wrote, Liz?”

“Here. For Cabbage Tree Island an O.”

“Or a zero.”

“Yes. It was transmitted as an O but how would they know whether it was one or the other?”

“So, we had better put that down as either.”

“The same as with the one we got at the Shack.”

“Then Stephen’s Peak was an M, Boondelbah Island the figure 3 and Broughton Island was a J,” said Liz concluding the list.

“So we’ve got them all except for the first five.”

“It looks like we’ve started this competition from the wrong end, doesn’t it. We have got all the bottom ones and missed out all the top ones.”

“Come on,” said Liz. “Let’s see if we can make some sense of the clues we do have.”

“Three Ss, two Ns, two Os or two zeros.”

“Or one O and one zero.”

“J, an H, an M.”

“5 and a 3,” said Cate concluding.

They looked at the list.

S S S N N O O M W H J 5 3

The list of locations and their clues

Snapper Is	N
Boondaba Is	5
Corrie Is	S
Rooke Is	S
Chinaman’s Knob	S
The Shack	O
Bulahdelah Pt	W
Yacaaba Hd	N
Barromee Hill	H
Cabbage Tree Is	O
Stephen’s Peak	M
Boondelbah Is	3
Broughton Is	J

“Now this is what it says in the sheet you found: ‘The 18 letters and numerals will, when assembled and juggled, provide the location of the key’. Well, let’s assemble and juggle the thirteen we’ve got.”

“Though I think they mean juggle and assemble. You’ve got to do your juggling first before you do the assembling.”

“Alright. Let’s juggle first.

“Well. Let’s make a start. I will try and make sense of the clues—make them into a name. Why don’t you try and find a place with lots of esses, ens and ohs.” They set to work.

“Well. It’s not any of the offshore islands, anyway. They don’t have any esses in their names.”

“The word is bound to start with a consonant. There are plenty to choose from—S, J, N, M, H or W. But the problem is there are hardly any vowels, two Os, that’s all.”

“Maybe I should look for a name which has two Os in it.”

“But what if the last five clues are all vowels?”

“We can’t worry about that. What was it that football coach used to say—‘You play the game with the cards you’re dealt’. Well, we’ve only been dealt two Os. So let’s do the best we can with that.”

“So what places have two Os?”

“Excluding offshore island, there’s Boondaba.”

“No good. No Bs or Ds. And no As either.”

“Bombah Point?”

“No Bs again, or As, or I or T.”

“Boolambayte?”

“No Bs, no L, no A, no Y, T or E.

“Johnson’s Beach or Johnson’s Hill?”

“Well there is a J, yes two Os, an H and two Ns. Liz, this must be it.”

“But there’s no B or E or A or CH.”

“And no H I L L either. But remember we still lack five clues. So it could be either.”

“Let’s take the letters for *Johnsons* away from the list of clues. What do we have left?”

“S, M, 3, 5, W.”

“What could they stand for?”

“W could stand for west. And S for south. But I don’t know what M could stand for.”

“Miles?”

“Hardly. It wouldn’t make sense for us to find a place and then have to go miles away from it.”

“Metres, then.”

“That’s right. They’ll be using metric measurement, won’t they? Alright, let’s assume that M means metres. Then the 3 and the 5—what do they indicate?”

“35 metres?”

“Or 53 for that matter.”

“West? Or south?”

“South west! 35 or 53 metres south west.”

“But which one?”

“You know, if we had just one more clue we would know whether it was the beach or the hill. What’s the nearest station we haven’t reached?” They looked at the maps again.

“Here,” said Liz pointing. “This saddle on the peninsula on Lake Boolambayte.”

“We could get there by boat easily. How far is it from here?”

“From here to Bombah Point, say two and a half miles.”

“Then up Lake Boolambayte another mile or so. We could do it!”

“At this time of night?”

“Well,” said Cate. “When I said ‘we’ I was thinking of Mark. Tom and Bill are exhausted but Mark could do it, couldn’t he?”

“Hmm. I’m just thinking of what Mummy will say if she hears about it. Mind you, she *needn’t* know,” said Liz talking half to herself. “Daddy wouldn’t stop him unless there was danger.”

“Let’s go and ask him.”

“He’s talking to Tom.”

“Better still. Let’s talk to them both and see what they think about the idea. Then we had better get Mark to speak to Dad.”

Cate and Liz found the two boys talking quietly in their tent. Bill was sound asleep. They explained their conclusions to them.

“It’s something to do with Johnson’s Hill or Johnson’s Beach. If we had one more clue we would know.”

“We’ve checked all the alternatives. There is no other place which has so many *esses* and *ens* in it.”

“And the remaining clues could give the bearing,” said Tom looking at the sheet with their conclusions.

“What about it, Mark?” said Cate. Could you get the station on the Boolambayte peninsula tonight?” They all looked at him.

“Too right,” he grinned. “Provided I get the okay from the judge at first instance.”

“What does he mean?” asked Cate looking at Liz.

“Daddy,” she replied.