

INTO THE DEEP

By Lisa Merrifield (Australia)

This is my last will and testament and a luscious opportunity to speak my mind and acknowledge kindness where it is due.

To those who thought I would never amount to much, how right you were. To those who told me I would die penniless, I blow a trumpeting raspberry from my grave.

To my immodest wife of 270 days, Felicity, who left in disgust (for which I don't blame her) and who returned decades later behind a smile of bright falseness (for which I do blame her), I leave a modest annuity.

To my sister-in-law, Angela, who described me to my face as "a failure as a human being", I leave a specially-commissioned, full-length portrait of myself in the nude.

In memory of Sister Euphorbia, headmistress, I leave funds for a school hall to commemorate an extraordinary woman, who insisted I learn by heart Mackellar's 'I love a Sunburnt Country' when I was eight, the words of which ... The sapphire-misted mountains, The hot gold hush of noon ... years later sustained me through dark nights in Phitsanulok Gaol.

To my Latin tutor at the University of Sydney who told me I had an original mind, I leave the contents of my library with my apologies for abandoning my scholarship.

To the landlord of the Sheep and Whistle in Darwin I leave \$10,000 for being a decent bloke to all and sundry, especially sundry.

To my lost friend Theo, who taught me the craft of boat building on Bangkok Harbor, I leave my sloop Hindsight. I have drowned many times but never at sea. Theo, you were right: the bottle has fearsome depths.

To the Anglican Chaplain of Phitsanulok Gaol, the gentle Reverend Loesan, I leave funds for the tertiary education in Australia of his son Nai-Thim, as was his dream.

To the woman who owned the grocery in Toowoomba who extended credit for food when I was not of sweet fragrance, I leave \$20,000.

To Doug Plunkett, truckie, who gave me a lift from Canberra to Wangaratta and paid for a dentist to ease my agony at my lowest ebb, I leave enough to purchase his own rig and be a free man.

To Big Ted, maitre d' of the Melbourne Men's Hostel, who saved me from the streets and then from myself, I leave \$500,000.

To my best mates at the Hostel, Creaking Reg, Louie the Fly and Smacko, who stalwartly listened to my poems, I leave incomes for life to be administered by Big Ted.

To kind Janet, cleaner at the clinic where I finally conquered alcohol too late for my liver, whose wicked conversation enriched my painful mornings and who never forgot to pick up my lottery ticket, I leave \$500,000 for her retirement, so that she may never again stoop to the squalid messes of men like me.

To the magazine, New Lit, who featured my only published poems Quandary and Redemption, I leave \$50,000.

To the memory of the girl I loved, who thought I was someone, for whom I would have become something, I leave funds for a bench in the Blue Gum Gardens, overlooking the lake and bearing the plaque: In memory of my sweet Amelia, 1960 – 1979.

The Amelia Singer Fund for Cancer Research receives the remainder of my fortune – eight million dollars.

To those of you still adding up, yes, it was a bloody big win. On my grave I request the words:
Vehimur in Altum – 'We are carried out into the deep'.