

Click: Cindy Broadbent

Sydney summer nights—was the whole city still awake, Joanna wondered. It must be 30 degrees. Alone in her bed with only a sheet over her she lay hot and wakeful. The overhead fan had developed a noise. Every sixth revolution it clicked. She willed herself not to count—*click!* She rolled over and checked the time on her phone. The bright screen nearly blinded her. Five past midnight, 14th January. It was exactly a year since her friend, Mel, drunk and broken-hearted had crashed her car into a tree and been killed instantly. *Click!* She lay on her back listening to the cars on the busy road outside, watching their lights reflected on the ceiling. Should she turn the fan off, stop the infernal click?

But the room seemed cooler now, the fan must be working. In fact, the space next to her bed was cold--very cold. Joanna shivered, reached down and pulled the cotton blanket up to her shoulders. The icy feeling was still there, close to her, unmoving, dispelling the sultry air of the room. The fan had stopped clicking, there were no cars passing her window or lights on the ceiling. She felt suspended in time, if she extended her hand she was sure it would pass through the ice pillar at her side.

She remembered visiting the morgue, holding Mel's ice-cold dead hand and weeping. Her tears had felt hot on her face, walking outside was like walking from a fridge into an oven.

Joanna had accompanied Mel's grieving mother to see a Medium. Among the jumbled things she remembered was the woman's comment: 'You'll always know when someone from the other side is trying to contact you—the temperature in the room will drop. You can talk to them, and if you're scared, tell them, and they'll go away.'

'Mel', Joanna said aloud. 'Can you hear me? I'm sorry about Matt, is that the right thing to say?' She could imagine Mel snorting with derisive laughter. 'I miss you, but I'm alone now, Matt couldn't cope—he left me too. I get scared at night.'

The room felt warmer, the ice pillar melted away. She heard the fan again: *Click...click...click.*