

Lady F. : Sandra Faase

It was the early 1980s. A chauffeured Bentley had been spotted at nightfall. A mysterious older woman alighted and was ushered to the luxury suite. Heather and Melissa's new friend, Eric, said his sources had told him the mysterious woman was none other than the fabulously wealthy Lady F.

Eric was a five-year veteran of the health retreat. It was a break from his busy job in the Melbourne rag trade. He was a pudgy young man in his late 20s who was to inherit the family business and his father insisted he attend. Eric endured the unappetising broths and various treatments the retreat was known for a fortnight each year; a small price to pay for his inheritance.

Eric had told the girls about the celebrities he'd seen at the retreat. The girls were sceptical. It was clear Eric was a young man prone to hyperbole. But his crazy exaggerations appealed to their youthful urge for mischief. They too were there to lose weight. And if not for Eric, their impossibly comical midnight raids of the facility kitchen and neighbouring orchards in search of supplements to their meagre rations, would not have been possible and their stay incredibly dull.

The following day, the girls were early at the breakfast table, a bit tired from their midnight shenanigans. Eric was already sitting down to a slice of toasted nut bread and vegetable broth. They sat at a large round, wooden table - a few chairs still empty.

A silhouetted figure appeared backed by the intense early autumn light through the large bay window. The girls and Eric were in minor shock as Lady F pulled out a chair and sat at their table. She made no effort at a polite greeting.

The three of them sat heads bowed over their sparse breakfasts exhibiting none of the bravado of their kitchen raid the night before. The retreat's staff darted over to tend to Lady F's dietary requirements. For a woman approaching 70, Lady F looked impeccably trim, her lacquered brown shoulder length hair an impenetrable helmet.

No one uttered a word. Lady F deftly consumed her egg and broth, wiped her hands on a serviette, and promptly left the table. Lady F's formidable mystique remained intact, and they did not see her again although they joked that she had probably opted for the colonic irrigation.