

## Chapter One

The day the war ended, Tilly Galloway sat at her desk on the second floor of the *Daily Herald* building in Sydney's Pitt Street and cried with delirious joy.

She held a sodden handkerchief in her left hand, smeared with what was left of her foundation and mascara, and a cigarette was gripped tightly between the middle and index fingers of her right, the imprint of her Regimental Red Helena Rubinstein lipstick like a kiss on the cork tip end. She dragged hard, filling her lungs with heat and smoke, and her blood with the rush that had kept her going for so long now she couldn't imagine getting through a day without it. When the tears stopped, when her shoulders stopped shaking, she lit another from the butt of her fourth that morning and leant back in her chair, eyes closed, feeling her heart knock against her ribs.

The whole bloody thing was really over.

She opened her eyes with a quick blink as the cacophonous sounds of victory swept right through her. The phone next to her typewriter rang but it took her a moment to hear it amid the crying and shrieking laughter all around her in the women's newsroom. She tugged off her marquisite earring, reached for the black receiver and pressed it to her ear.

'Galloway.'

A song blared from the wireless in the corner—something triumphant with trumpets and stirring strings—and her colleagues, police reporter Maggie Pritchard and Frances Langley from courts, were spinning each other around an imaginary dance floor, Maggie's blonde curls bouncing at her shoulders and Frances's glasses slipping to the end of her large nose and in danger of toppling to the floor as they threw their heads back gaily and hooted and hollered.

'Hello? Are you there?'

Tilly looked back across the sea of empty desks and abandoned Remingtons. Cups of tea were going cold. Someone had pushed open one of the windows overlooking Pitt Street and a gust of wind whipped through the floor and unsettled stacks of copy paper, which swirled into the air like joyously thrown wedding confetti.

'I'm having trouble hearing you, whoever you are,' she yelled down the line. 'In case you haven't heard, the war's over. We're celebrating.' Tilly puffed on her cigarette and flicked the ash into an overflowing ashtray on her desk.

'Tilly! Can you hear me now?' Tilly recognised the voice of her flatmate and dearest friend, Mary.

She covered her free ear with a cupped hand. 'I can barely hear you, Mary.'

'Can you really believe it's over?'

Agony aunt Betty Norris, always called Dear Agatha on account of it being the name of the column the newspaper had been running since the dawn of time, beckoned Tilly to the wireless. 'The prime minister's about to speak,' she implored, then stopped and cleared her throat, her voice choking with emotion and her eyes filled with tears. 'Hurry!'

'Wait on, Mary. Chifley's on. I'll call you back as soon as I can.' Tilly dropped the receiver into the phone's cradle with a hard thunk, grabbed her ashtray and ran over to join the huddle around the wireless.

Tilly and Mary had left their Potts Point flat so early that morning that Kings Cross had still been asleep. They'd been too excited to stay in bed, as rumours had swirled for days that the war in the Pacific might be over that very day and they hadn't wanted to miss a minute of it. As they'd walked hurriedly through Hyde Park—they were far too excited to stand in the crush on the tram—and then all the way down Pitt Street to the *Daily Herald* building, expectation had crackled in the winter air. Nine days before, the B-29 Superfortress bomber, the *Enola Gay*, had dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The bomb was codenamed Little Boy and Tilly had tried not to think about such an innocent name being used for a weapon of such destruction. And then another dropped, three days after that, on Nagasaki.

The war had been over in Europe since May, but the Japanese had fought on in the Pacific until the bombs had all but wiped out two entire cities.

Now, after so much devastation and loss and grief, the end felt close, real, final.

Maggie slipped two fingers in the corners of her mouth and let fly a piercing sound. Frances laughed and elbowed Maggie in the ribs. Just then, fashion editor Kitty Darling arrived and sashayed directly over to her colleagues. 'It is true? Everyone on the street is saying it's over.'

Tilly nodded. 'Yes. It's about to be announced.'

Kitty tugged at each fingertip of her white gloves and slipped them off, clutching them in her hand as tears welled in her eyes. Kitty had never let wartime rationing hinder her ability to look ravishing. She was sporting a tan, tailored, square-shouldered suit with a pleated skirt and a silk flower was pinned to her left lapel.

'Thank goodness,' she said. 'I hope I never have to see khaki *anything* again as long as I live.'

Prime Minister Ben Chifley's stoic tone filled the air, the reception crackling with static.

'Where's Mrs Freeman?' Dear Agatha gasped, enquiring after the editor of the *Daily Herald's* women's pages. 'She should be hearing this, too.'

'She's up with Sinclair, I expect, planning the victory edition of the paper,' Frances replied.

'Hush! Or I'll whistle again,' Maggie threatened and the women were finally quiet.

'Fellow citizens,' the prime minister started, sounding as exhausted as everyone in the country was by six years of fighting. 'The war is over.'

'I still expect to hear John Curtin's voice when someone announces the prime minister is about to speak.' Dear Agatha dabbed at her eyes with a dainty embroidered handkerchief. 'Poor man. Imagine living through all this and dying a few weeks before it's over?'

Maggie lunged forward and twiddled with the tuning knob. 'Sshhh.'

'Turn it to the left, not the right, Maggie,' Dear Agatha instructed, which earned her a look of reproach from Maggie.

'Oh, for goodness sake, be quiet.' Frances held a finger to her lips and looked sharply at Maggie.

The women leant in, holding their collective breath.

The radio crackled. 'The Japanese Government has accepted the terms of surrender imposed by the Allied nations and hostilities will now cease. At this moment let us offer thanks to God. Let us remember those whose lives were given that we may enjoy this glorious moment and may look forward to a peace which they have won for us.'

Dear Agatha crossed herself and then blew her nose loudly. Cookery editor Vera Maxwell, sitting at the desk nearest the wireless, dropped her head into her crossed arms and sobbed.

Tilly found herself saying in a whisper, too disbelieving to utter it out loud in case she jinxed it, 'The Japanese have surrendered.' Chifley himself had said it. There really was to be victory in the Pacific.

A strange sort of hush overcame Tilly and then they all succumbed to it as the news sunk in that right had endured after so many years of despair. A hard-fought victory had finally been achieved, at a brutal and terrible cost. The unspeakable human suffering of the war would come to an end. The men and women who'd been so far away for so long would be coming home. Some families and loved ones would be reunited.

'To victory,' Maggie shouted.

'To peace at last,' Dear Agatha said through her sobs.

Around her, her colleagues' stunned silence suddenly gave way to laughing and cheering and singing. Frances began to bellow 'Rule Britannia' and everyone joined in. The world's darkest days were over and life might finally return to what it had been before Hitler and Hirohito and Mussolini. Tilly's head was filled with a loud buzzing, and for the first time since 1941 she didn't immediately assume it was the sound of Japanese Zeros flying low over Sydney Harbour. She picked up her ashtray and went back to her desk, reaching for her Craven As. She tapped the pack against her palm, pinched the last cigarette between her trembling red lips and struck a match, hoping one more puff would still the shudder working its way up her body, from her toes past her roiling stomach to the end of each strand of pinned and curled brown hair.

It was over.

She looked up and wished she could see the sky instead of the old and yellowed plaster ceiling. Her vision blurred and she imagined it shattering into a million pieces and flying into the atmosphere, and the grey lampshades hanging from it disappearing into the azure sky as if they were being pulled by a puppeteer's strings. Then the black Remington typewriters on each desk began to sway and float as light as feathers on a warm breeze, the clouds above them soft as the cotton bolls she'd seen freshly picked in Gunnedah when she'd reported from there back in 1942.

An enormous weight had been lifted from Australia's shoulders but Tilly still carried a burden which sat like lead in her stomach.

Then someone was calling her name and she turned. Mary was running towards her, wearing a smile as wide as Sydney Harbour. Tilly swept Mary up into her arms and lifted her off her feet, which made Mary giggle before they hugged each other breathless. Mary was quivering with excitement.

'You didn't ring me back, you rat.'

Tilly lowered Mary to the floor. Her cheeks were wet from Mary's tears. 'I meant to. Honestly.'

'It's really over, Tilly,' Mary cried. 'It really is peace. I can hardly believe it, can you?'

'I can and I do.'

'Everyone in Sydney's heading out to the streets. Come and see. Can't you hear it?' Mary grabbed Tilly's hand and pulled her across the floor to the windows. Pitt Street was already overflowing with people, wave after wave of them, and from their vantage point they saw hats and Union Jacks and the Stars and Stripes fluttering above people's heads. Shreds of paper were falling from the sky in intermittent bursts and they swirled and spun in the blustery sunshine of that Sydney winter day.

'Our dear boys will be coming home now, Tilly.' Mary's arm was around Tilly and she squeezed her tight.

Tilly nodded, overcome.

And then Mary's tears became laughter and joy. 'Bugger this for a joke. No one in their right mind will be wanting to call in a classified ad today. Let's get out there and celebrate, too. Because we deserve it, don't you think?'

The most important story of her career was unfolding all around her. A surge of adrenaline set her trembling. It took Tilly half a minute to grab her hat, her jacket and her reporter's notebook, and race Mary to the stairs.

She had never in her life seen crowds so enormous. Was it possible that every single person in Sydney had marched into the street for the victory celebrations? There were soldiers and sailors, American and Australian and English, and girls in their navy WAAAF uniforms walking arm in arm, striding towards peace and their hopes for a brighter future. Women kissed policemen. Horses pulled carts filled with revellers, and became skittish as they were daubed with lipstick, the word 'victory' smudged into their coats. Any vehicle that made it through the crowds was soon swamped with pedestrians hitching rides on its running boards. Schoolchildren in short pants and hand-knitted jumpers darted in and out of the crowds and people burst into spontaneous song everywhere she looked, dancing the hokey-pokey and forming conga lines to the music blaring from any nearby wireless.

At the Cenotaph in Martin Place, there were tears of joy and sombre prayers and the laying of flowers to honour the war dead. Young women with flags poked into their hats like sprays of flowers marched alongside soldiers. Every piece of paper people could get their hands on high up in office buildings—including telephone books and old posters—had been shredded and was being thrown out of wide open windows, paving the streets bright white. Outside the Ministry of Munitions in Castlereagh Street, a group of men in suits stood in foot-high piles of shredded paper, grabbing great handfuls of it and throwing it into the air like hay. On Campbell Street Tilly walked through clouds of smoke wafting from fireworks and crackers let off by the Chinese community, and laughed in joyful surprise when she stumbled upon a thirty-foot long paper dragon worming its way through the throng, lit up by Catherine wheels. In Elizabeth Street, a smart-looking man whirled with his hat in his hand, and seemed to float on air as he danced, as weightless as Fred Astaire, the road under his feet strewn with paper.

And the sheer roaring noise of it, the laughing, shouting, crying-with-joy sound of it, was like waves, bouncing off the city's sandstone buildings and echoing down one street and up another, the vibrations so powerful Tilly wondered if they had created whitecaps in the water down at Circular Quay.

The sight and sound of pure jubilation, such a gleeful communal outpouring of joy, made her cry too, and Tilly had let herself enjoy the moment, her tears washing away her fears for just a little while.

## Chapter Two

When Tilly had finally battled her way through the crowds and made it back to her desk, she sat with her fingers poised over the keys of her typewriter for a moment. She was suddenly nervous with the pressure to do justice to the freshly minted peace; and filled with pride that she had been a witness to such an historic day. She took a deep breath and began, recounting every moment she'd witnessed out on the streets, the tips of her fingers growing numb as she slammed the keys on the old Remington, the words flying onto the page as she took time to fully describe everything she'd seen and experienced in a way that would honour the day and the sacrifices people had made and the futures they had put on hold.

And when she turned the platen knob and pulled her final paragraphs from the typewriter, a hovering copyboy scurried upstairs with the pages in his inky hands to take them to one of the mole-like subeditors whose task it was to combine them with all of the other reports that were set to fill the victory edition of the next day's paper.

Tilly leant back in her chair, lit another cigarette and surveyed the empty desks all around her. When she and Mary had raced out into the streets earlier that day, the other women had followed in a happy convoy and they hadn't returned. Courts and crimes and advice and fashion and cookery stories wouldn't find a place in the paper tomorrow among all the stories about the official end of the war.

When the war had broken out in September 1939, Tilly had been secretary to the newspaper's editor, Rex Sinclair. If she had written about her trajectory and put someone else in the story, she might not believe it had ever happened, that a waterside worker's daughter from Millers Point had found herself in such a position at Sydney's bestselling daily newspaper.

She would have headlined it 'Girl From Wrong Side Of Tracks Makes Good'.

She'd been a smart girl, dux of her primary school, soared through her leaving certificate at high school and then finished top of the class at her secretarial college with the fastest and most accurate typing speed and excellent shorthand. She'd been recommended to Mr Sinclair by her shorthand teacher, who knew how important it was in the newspaper business, and when Mr Sinclair had discovered she hailed from Millers Point, his eyes had sparkled and he'd offered her the job, after a quick shorthand exercise to settle his mind that he'd made the right call. She had passed with one hundred per cent accuracy. She would be forever grateful to the bootmaker's son who had given a young girl an opportunity others might not have been afforded. He had opened a door to another world, one she had never imagined in a thousand years would be open to someone like her, a young woman with little else to recommend her but her intelligence and her dreams.

She had learnt so much working for Mr Sinclair, sitting at a desk outside his office up on the prestigious third floor where he had a view over every desk and therefore every man in the newsroom. From her perch, she had grown to know him, the newspaper and the city. She'd learnt when he was pondering a decision by the way he strode in circles around his oak desk and when to avoid him when he was about to roar at a reporter or a subeditor or, by phone, the typesetters. She had reminded him to put on a tie when the Chairman of the Board Robert Fowles swept in, a man who barely ever cast an eye in her direction. The chairman always sported a pristine gun-metal grey homburg and a greatcoat about his shoulders, as if he had just led a battle on the Western Front. He was delivered to Pitt Street in his shining black Wolseley by his driver, inevitably to share his views on the paper's coverage of some such issue or other, usually industrial unrest among the perverted communists working on the waterfront or down in the coal mines. Tilly had observed that there always seemed to be shouting from behind closed doors when the chairman visited.

Then there were the section editors shuffling past her desk for editorial meetings, who appeared harried and aged, because they were. Their daily editing challenge, to keep stories short, had become more pressing than ever with newsprint in such short supply during the war years. Every so often, the father of chapel—the printers' union's senior delegate—would emerge from the incessant roaring clickety-clack of the typesetting machines on the printing floor to raise the concerns of his brothers over one problem or another downstairs. There would also often be shouting when he visited, too.

The editor of the women's pages, the ever elegant and unruffled Mrs Dorothy Freeman, whose office was down on the second floor, had a regular weekly appointment with Mr Sinclair and they

would always have tea and scones because Mrs Freeman liked them and Mr Sinclair believed it was important to keep her happy. He was well aware of the newspaper's imperative to attract women readers so advertisers would be enticed to buy space to sell rayon stockings and cigarettes and make-up and antacid powders and children's summer sandals and dress patterns and satin nightgowns for six shillings and eleven coupons.

Tilly had become familiar with all the managerial routines of a daily newspaper, including the weekly editorial conferences and daily editorial councils. She knew everyone and took it upon herself to remind Mr Sinclair about Peter McDougall's sick wife and to arrange a delivery of flowers; to purchase something from the gift registry at David Jones for the upcoming marriage of Dorothy from Sales.

She knew that each morning a conga line of reporters would cross the reporters' room and make a beeline for Mr Sinclair's office, just as soon as they'd had their first smoko, to argue about why their yarn was bloody well buried on page eight, or to gossip about what the other papers in Sydney were covering and how those other blokes had missed the real story and no doubt been hoodwinked by some minister or other or the army or how they were down in the gutter again with the crooks and the spivs. That criticism was most usually levelled at the scandal sheet *Truth*, full of racing and adultery and crime when it appeared on newsstands every Sunday.

The *Daily Herald* prided itself on the fact that it was Sydney's newspaper of record and it would never lower itself to run those kinds of stories. Its reporters wore that pride as a badge of honour too. Which didn't mean they didn't pore over the *Truth's* stories every Monday morning with gleeful sneers and sly winks, and place their racing bets according to the tips within its sports pages.

Tilly had been like every other secretary in the place, a young woman simply dressed in a tweed suit with freshly applied lipstick and short hair neatly curled around her face and pinned back at the nape of her neck in a roll. Brown hair, brown eyes—although sometimes when she wanted to feel sophisticated she claimed them to be hazel—perhaps slightly taller than average but nothing out of the box.

Until the day she witnessed a robbery at a pharmacy on Castlereagh Street during her lunch break. She'd been having a quick lunch at Repin's Coffee Inn with Dorothy from Sales to hear all about Dorothy's honeymoon at Thirroul and had just finished her cup of coffee and a toasted fried egg sandwich when she'd heard screams and had seen the shop assistant bolt into the street shouting, 'Help' at the top of her lungs.

She had rushed straight over, asked the panicked shop assistant if she was hurt, instructed Shirley to fetch her a cup of tea from Repin's and waited with her while the police arrived. When they did, Tilly passed on a description to the officers (the assailant was short, blond, wore a flat cap over his short hair, sported brown trousers and a dark grey overcoat, and had a limp), and then listened on as they questioned the poor woman, who by this stage needed to be sent to hospital on account of a nervous attack.

When she explained to Mr Sinclair the reason for her tardiness in returning from lunch, he'd listened transfixed. For years, she'd listened intently to the reporters from the newsroom selling stories to their editor, as they fought their colleagues for prominence on the news pages, so she could learn everything she possibly could about the news business. When she found herself in the position to pitch one of her own, she was well-versed in how to sell it. She infused the robbery with all the drama and fear one might expect from a street stick-up, and when she'd finished, Mr Sinclair had leant back in his chair, thrown her a smile and nodded. 'That's quite a story, Tilly.'

And as she'd walked back to her desk that day, feeling six feet tall, she knew that his smile and his nod of approval meant more than he would ever give away.

Tilly had been waiting for a chance to prove herself, to show that she could do more than take appointments and answer phone calls, and she'd known in that moment that she had met the challenge with flying colours. She had for some years, perhaps ten, known full well that she was wasted as his secretary, but it wasn't the done thing to go around pointing out how smart you were in the company of copyboys related to the senior newsmen. She didn't have those connections and she was a woman, two strikes against her from the very beginning.

When the Federal Government had removed journalists from the reserved occupations list in February 1942, a flurry of patriotism and careerism exploded in the newsroom, and the newspaper soon had its own manpower crisis on its hands. A week after the robbery on Castlereagh Street, two reporters up and enlisted with the AIF and another two abandoned the Sydney newsroom for the excitement and danger of London and the glamour of war reporting, forcing Mr Sinclair to

urgently fix the gaping hole in his reporting staff. He had emerged from his office one afternoon, after a rather loud row on the telephone, looked around the newsroom with a resigned stare and when his eyes met Tilly's he'd pointed at her and said, 'You'll do.'

She'd leapt to her feet, knocking over a cup of tea. In that moment, she hadn't cared a jot where it had spilled. 'Me?'

'Yes, you. Think you can handle it?'

'Of course I can,' Tilly had declared.

A chorus of jeers rose from the men in the newsroom, who'd been hanging on every word, always on the lookout for newsroom gossip to trade at the Sydney Journalists' Club, a place Tilly and her colleagues were not allowed to join on account of their sex. Information was power and there was always a tussle to have the latest, the juiciest, the freshest; and that game of reputation-building and influence-peddling was one only the men could play.

'You've got to be kidding.'

'Not the secretary, Sinclair. Surely you can do better than that.'

Tilly didn't need to turn to know who'd made the comment. She would know Donald Robinson's voice anywhere. The senior reporter had always made a point of sauntering by her desk whenever he had a spare minute and perched himself there, waiting for her to engage in conversation. When she hadn't, ignoring his smirks and his long stares at her breasts, he would respond in whispers and taunts. 'Have a drink with me tonight, Tilly. You're a very attractive girl. You know, I've been sitting behind my desk over there wondering if you're wearing lingerie under that sensible suit. The fancy French kind. Are you?'

She despised him.

At the sound of his supercilious chuckling, Tilly had glared sharply in his direction. Robinson was leaning back in his chair, his feet on his desk crossed at the ankles, his head cupped in his hands. 'She'll never make a reporter, Sinclair. She doesn't have what it takes. I mean, look at her. Who'll take her seriously?'

Mr Sinclair had turned his back on his male reporter and smiled at Tilly. 'Make me proud, Tilly.'

And just like that, she'd been promoted to a reporting position. She'd quickly packed up all her things and galloped downstairs to the women's newsroom where Mrs Freeman already had a desk waiting for her. Tilly might have been the *Daily Herald's* newest reporter but she was a woman reporter and no woman had ever had a desk up in the main newsroom and, according to the newsmen of the third floor, no woman ever would.

The main newsroom had always been a male domain—except for the secretaries, of course—and the newspapermen liked it that way. Women reporters weren't trusted up there, Tilly knew, from all her years spent overhearing the ways the men talked about the women reporters downstairs.

'That's one for the sob sisters,' they would snigger at the merest suggestion that one of their colleagues should follow up a story with any hint of a woman's angle in it. In effect, that meant that every story in which a woman featured, unless of course the story was about Tilly Devine or Kate Leigh and their sly grog-running years or their razor gangs. They were mysteriously the men's stories to write.

Relegated to the second floor, Tilly had learnt the ropes from the women around her. She'd shadowed Maggie Pritchard on the police round, covering break and enters, petty crime and the exploits of dodgy wartime conmen. She'd trailed along with Frances Langley, scurrying after her galloping strides, to the Monday morning magistrates' court appearances of those caught up in too much weekend tomfoolery, drunkenness and violence.

She'd covered everything during her twelve months as a general reporter on the paper, from city floods to state parliament's question time. If a man in his cups fell into the harbour and drowned, she filed the story. And when, back in 1943, she'd been called into Mr Sinclair's office and been told of the decision to appoint her the newspaper's first woman war correspondent, she'd beamed with pride. And although he'd tried to hide it, because a newsman didn't show such emotions, she'd seen the gleaming twinkle in his eye.

'I won't let you down, Mr Sinclair,' Tilly had murmured into the lapel of his smoky suit jacket after she'd rounded his desk and thrown her arms around him.

'Yes, yes,' he'd replied gruffly. 'Don't make me regret it.' And while he huffed, Tilly had noticed she had been the first to release herself from their embrace.

When Tilly had told her parents, her mother had cried too at the idea that her daughter was to be sent off to the war, but she needn't have worried herself, as it turned out. Much to her frustration, Tilly had written about the war without ever leaving the country or interviewing a soldier.

After three years working in the women's newsroom and observing her colleagues, she knew them well. If there was a scent of Tosca Eau de Cologne in the air, she knew Dear Agatha was at work. The advice columnist sprayed it liberally at her neck and wrists while talking to herself as she typed answers to readers' letters, attempting in the kindest way possible to solve their complicated life dilemmas in three neat paragraphs.

'While you may believe your new mother-in-law to be interfering, she is likely missing her son terribly and most keen to ensure he is comfortable in his new home and circumstances.'

She then lifted her fingers from the keys, leant back in her chair and announced in an exasperated fashion, 'For god's sake. Leave your daughter-in-law alone, you interfering old busybody. Does it really matter if she doesn't iron her tea towels?'

If the smell of Woodbines drifted across the floor, it was Maggie, who smoked incessantly at her desk while she transcribed from her shorthand notes stories of the wartime crimes and misdemeanours of the populace of Sydney. Nothing seemed to faze Maggie. She didn't blink when covering bodies dragged out of the harbour, or backyard abortionists arrested after the death of a patient, or raids on upmarket gambling dens or men arrested for wilfully and obscenely exposing themselves in a public lavatory, often in the new men's toilets at Lang Park near Wynyard Station.

If something smelt delicious, it was Vera, who had been experimenting with another of the ration recipes she insisted her colleagues judge before she put them in her column. The best, by popular acclaim, had been meatloaf with boiled egg. The worst by a unanimous vote was choko marmalade. With one taste, Tilly had vowed to never eat marmalade again until it was made from real fruit, even if it meant she would have to wait until the end of the war.

While Maggie and Frances and Tilly answered to Mr Sinclair, the women of the women's pages worked for Mrs Freeman. Tilly had always thought Mrs Freeman to be quite formidable. She'd been at the paper forever and had edited the women's pages even longer. Tilly knew her, of course, from her time as Mr Sinclair's secretary, when Mrs Freeman had walked by so lightly on her feet that sometimes Tilly swore the woman was barefoot. She was always immaculately dressed. She wore her hair in a trim bun pinned at the nape of her neck, which emphasised its length and her high cheekbones. Her make-up was always flawless, lightly powdered and pale pink lips, not too much for her age and not too little. Mrs Freeman's exact age was a closely guarded secret, but Tilly guessed she was perhaps in her sixties, judging by the fine lines that had settled into the corners of her eyes and the back of her hands, which, while sheathed in white gloves during the day and black of an evening, were a gentle landscape of ridges and sunspots. She wore a simple wedding band on her left-hand ring finger and every day a string of pearls around her neck.

The women of the *Daily Herald* worked at the oldest desks in the building, and typed their copy on typewriters with the stiffest keys, which Maggie swore were as old as the paper itself, and ribbons that had been turned over so many times that if they were held up to the light, stories announcing the beginning of the war might be seen. They were surrounded by the detritus of life on a busy daily newspaper: old reporters' notebooks, torn pages scattered near ashtrays and stained teacups and crushed cigarette packets; wartime information booklets telling the women of Australia to eat more lamb, to do it for the boys, to make do and mend, reminding them that loose lips sunk ships, to keep their legs closed and deny men regular intercourse to banish venereal disease, to refrain from drink in case it might lead to intercourse, to keep a clean home to ward off infection, to not be too nervy lest it affect your children, to get your share of air and sunshine. The men may have carried the major burden of fighting the war on foreign shores, but the women had carried their own burdens at home, there was nothing surer.