

SHOW ME THE WAY TO GO HOME

By Tamaso Lonsdale

I knew a young woman once. I'll call her Daphne for this name always conjures up for me a picture of someone slightly scatterbrain. Not stupid, you understand, for Daphne was really quite intelligent but in some matters she was a little less than the full bob, as they used to say.

Daphne had absolutely no sense of direction. One false turn and she was hopelessly lost. North, South, East or West meant nothing to her. She could only function in left or right modes.

A street directory or map was of no use whatsoever to Daphne. She never knew which direction she was headed in the first place or even if she was holding the map the right way up. I talked to her often about this but she was quite unconcerned.

'I always get there in the end,' she would say, laughing. 'And often have a nice interesting little drive on the way.'

Personally, I found it infuriating when she made these totally unnecessary detours and I always insisted on navigating if I went anywhere with her.

Once, Daphne stayed at a friend's house in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs and drove to the city one evening to attend a function. It was daylight when she set out confidently noting landmarks for her return journey and assuring her friends that she would find her way back to the house easily. She had stayed there before and driven to the city once or twice in daylight.

However, Daphne soon found that going home late at night was no easy matter! All went well until she came to a big intersection where she was sure she should turn right but a sign said No Right Turn.

'No problem,' said Daphne to herself, being well-acquainted with this sort of dilemma. 'I'll just go straight ahead, take the first right, then right again and left up to the main road. Simple!'

But the next right said No Entry so she drove farther and turned right at the next street. To her bewilderment this went around in a massive curve, which she followed until even Daphne could tell it was the wrong direction. Admitting defeat she did a U-turn hoping to get back to where she started. But where was that?

Arriving at what appeared to be a familiar corner Daphne turned left only to find herself in a maze of narrow back streets, dimly lit and filled with parked cars and darkened houses. Driving

aimlessly up one street and down another she finally came to a main road but had not the faintest idea of which way to go. She turned right. Some time later she realized she was on her way back to the city.

At a red light, a taxi pulled up alongside her. Daphne called to the driver for directions. He smiled and nodded, waved his arms around and gabbled away in a torrent of broken English, of which she caught little. The light turned green and, with a friendly wave, he was gone.

So Daphne made another U-turn. She thought of ringing her friend but looked in vain for a phone box. In any case, it would have been of little help as she hadn't the vaguest idea where she was and there was nobody around to ask.

What to do? She just kept driving, turning here and there at what seemed appropriate places, watching for her landmarks and hoping that, by some happy intervention of God, she might suddenly see her friend's house magically appear.

But God wasn't interested in Daphne's problems.

Then she saw a man with his head in the engine of a broken-down truck. He obviously had enough worries of his own but there was nobody else to ask at this hour of night and surely he wouldn't mind helping a poor girl in distress. He didn't mind at all. He was most helpful and gave clear (but lengthy) directions.

'Go back the way you just came, love. Turn left at the stop sign. Go along three, four, maybe five little streets. You'll come to a main road. Beach Street. Turn right there, love. Follow it past the cemetery all the way to the end. Turn right and then left at the roundabout and straight ahead, and Bob's your uncle.'

Beaming her thanks Daphne set off again. She turned left at the stop sign and drove over a few little streets then right into the main road. There was no street sign but she assumed it must be Beach Street. It went on forever, twisting and turning, uphill and downhill, and looking less and less like the way home. She didn't see any cemetery.

Tired and dispirited by now, Daphne pulled to the side of the road. It was almost one o'clock in the morning and she was tempted to curl up on the back seat and go to sleep till daylight.

Then, her miracle happened! A merciful God had finally remembered her! Along came a bus! Its sign said Clovelly! Exactly where she wanted to go! Her troubles were over! She

tootled along behind the bus, stopping when it did and speeding up when it did. She soon found herself outside her friend's house.

I'll say one thing for Daphne. She learned her lesson.

'Next time I'm lost,' she said. 'I'm just going to wait for a bus! Or maybe I'll just catch one!'

Bio

Tamaso has been writing most of her life. She was first published at the age of nine in the Sunbeams children's section of the Sydney Sun and also read her stories on 2GB and 2SM radio stations' children's programs.

She is the author of nine teenage novelettes for 'reluctant readers', four books on Australian birds, several published short stories and poems and has self-published one book Skye's the Limit, a story about a young girl's fight to save a rainforest.

She has recently completed the third novel in trilogy form. The first book, Brothers? Uncles! Sister? Aunt! was published in 2002. The second book The Missus was published in 2010 and the third Beyond Darkness in 2012.

Also in 2012, a book of short stories Out of My Mind was published.

Tamaso has lived in Nimbin northern NSW for twenty years, during which time she has been a volunteer worker at Nimbin News Magazine and presented a Writers' Program on NIM-FM. Community radio. She now edits the literary magazine Beyond the Rainbow.