

# PETA CULVERHOUSE

## The Nobody People

*“The Anglo-Saxon word *wiht* [wichht] means a being or creature, which would include humans and gods, and in fact eventually meant ‘thing’ as well; *náwiht* [NAAH-wichht] is the ancestor of the Modern English word ‘nought’ and meant ‘nothing’ “. ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))*

Nellie Dean walked the cliffs. She was crying and praying to herself. She heard laughter behind her. “You are going to die Nellie” they whispered and giggled. She looked over the side of the cliffs. She didn’t want to die. She prayed harder and kept on walking. Stones moved in front of her and she staggered and fell to her knees. She retched and got up. Nellie wanted to move away from the cliffs but she couldn’t. They stopped her. They giggled and poked. Stones were flung at her feet. She staggered again. She couldn’t run. They held her back. They forced her to move forward. She couldn’t stop. The pain was excruciating when she did. She got up and walked forward again. She was panicking now. Her breaths short in her chest, the tears streaming down her face, she moved forward as though pulled over the stones that were thrown in her way, she staggered a final time and fell. Nellie smiled as she fell to her death into the waves crashing against the rocks.

The steamer rounded the headland to pick up the young woman’s body. It was discovered by the local gentry on their evening stroll. It was partially submerged as it was pushed gently up against the rocks. It was as if the ocean wanted to give her back. The feet and ankles were badly bruised, her eyes were wide open and she had a smile on her face. She hadn’t been dead more than a few hours. They hauled the body out of the water and after a cursory inspection by the coroner, death was pronounced as misadventure while walking precariously close to the cliffs. As befitted the time, the diver who rescued the body procured a post-mortem photographer to preserve the memory for future generations of his family to marvel at his miraculous escape from the Waverly Rocks to bring back a body of a girl who

tragically died before her time. This was appropriately taken before the family could claim the body to mourn.

The disconcerting smile on Nellie's face created a slight issue for the photographer and the diver when he posed with Nellie's remains for her final post mortem portraiture. Rigour mortis was setting in and the smile was becoming more hysteric. The photographer was an expert at these delicate situations and habitually had to ensure the corpse looked as real as possible for those grieving. He sewed Nellie's lips together to stop her teeth from showing and painted fake eyes on the lids. He also ensured that the bruising of her feet and ankles were not seen by posing Nellie in a sumptuous Victorian dress. When the photographer was satisfied with the results, he applied further theatre makeup and took the photograph.

Miss Adventure looked at her former self in a thrown out fish and chip newspaper wrapping that was dropped on the footpath that she followed every evening. The original photograph of her and the diver was on display at the hall relating to strange death customs in early Australia. Nellie was glad she at least was appropriately attired. She remembered only wearing a flimsy night dress on the evening it happened. She whispered in her head that her name was Nellie Dean, she was born in Sydney. She liked dancing and, she tried to remember. A boy, her brother, Robert. She walked on satisfied that tonight she was not going to forget. The Memories of 100 years sustained her.

The suicides all laughed at her as she passed the Rocks, heading towards the cemetery. They chanted and laughed:

*Don't forget yourself*

*Who you are*

*Where you have been*

*We have seen it all Wight Nellie Dean.*

A new suicide had joined the burgeoning flock. He looked confused and anxious. She smiled weakly at him knowing that in time, he would forget too and become one

of those little horribly disfigured hobgoblins that sat together on the path plotting and scheming. He smiled back and went back to his morose thinking. She kept walking.

Waverly Rocks had changed over the past century but her path never wavered. The only inconvenience for her was walking through the apartment buildings, cars, buses and people. It was a strange feeling being incorporeal. Stranger when a Sensitive felt her presence. She didn't know why she was restless or what happened to bring her into this state of in-between. All she remembered was falling to her death from the cliffs and nothing else before her fatal plunge into the sea that evening. Since then, she has wandered the witching hour for the past century.

Nellie walked to the cemetery and looked at her final resting place. She knew that was where she slept after her meander. She paused. Someone was there. Someone was at her resting place. They were taking a photograph of the gravestone. They had placed beautiful white lilies on her resting place. The person stood up. They were tall and masculine. They thanked Nellie for the photograph, patted her gravestone and turned around. The photographer took a step back almost falling over in the process. Nellie gasped. They could see her. He went white but stayed still. The flowers glowed. Nellie for all intents and purposes, blushed. The photographer, for all his shock was very good looking. He was waving his arm through her, trying to comprehend what she was or is. He tried to take a photograph and Nellie smiled, a little embarrassed that she wasn't exactly dressed for such an important occasion.

Nellie wondered if he could hear her. She asked "Can you hear me?" and made gestures with her hands as well, just in case. The man went completely pale and started to run frantically away from the cemetery and Nellie Dean. He was wailing at the top of his lungs, running into gravestones and looking furtively back at Nellie. "Wait! Don't go – help me". She tried to race after him but the graveyard arms grabbed her feet. She tried to pull away from them, to run after her potential rescuer. The arms persisted and pulled her down to sleep until tomorrow's witching hour.