

Vicki Stevens

(Excerpt from *Saving Dragonflies*)

Patch joins him as he follows the worn path through dense bush interspersed with silky oaks and lemon scented gums. Halfway down, he comes to a clearing where a massive Moreton Bay fig tree holds court, the spreading branches and dense foliage giving wide shade. A flash of colour catches his eye. Stepping close, he tugs a wad of purple silk partially buried beneath a buttress root, surprised by its weight. When unfolded, the fabric reveals an ornament that fits into the palm of his hand. He recognises it as a piece from his mother's china collection, *The Madonna With Child*. *What is it doing here?*

Leo circles the tree and finds more articles hidden among the thick buttress roots. A painted babushka doll with all five nestled pieces intact, a leather marble bag filled with wishing stones—grey stones, each with a single perfectly unbroken stripe wrapped around it—and a floral pencil case wedged too tight in a crevice to remove. What has he stumbled upon, a secret treasure trove of his mother's? After her initial stroke, she'd started doing some bizarre things. Maybe this was just another of her odd eccentricities ... *or somebody else's*.

He replaces each one as he found them and continues down to the water.