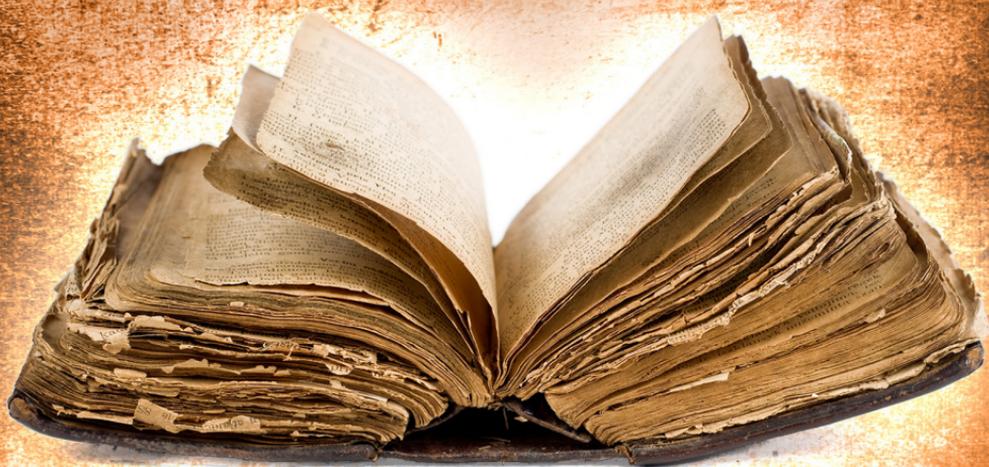


When you were born and when you will die,  
...would you want to know?

*the*  
SEVENTH  
LIST



**GRANT  
FINNEGAN**



# The Seventh List

Grant Finnegan

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v. 2014-08-01

## About the author

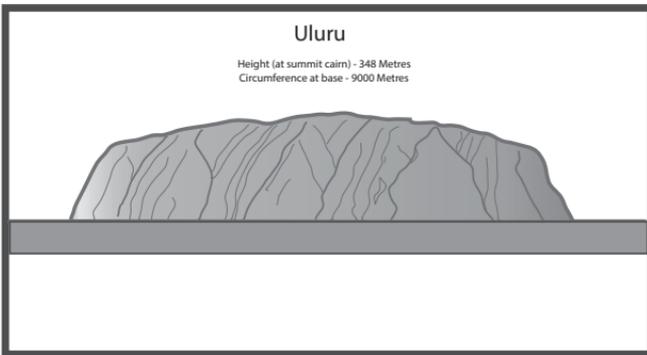
A voracious reader of action thrillers, **Grant Finnegan** began his literary journey more than ten years ago by writing his first story. He then began *The Seventh List*, inspired by the question, “what would you do in your life if you knew the date it would end?” He is currently working on a new action thriller concerned with life’s challenges and meaning, and how we cope with change. Grant is divorced with two teenage children, and lives near the beach in Melbourne, Australia. You can find him online at [grantfinnegan.com](http://grantfinnegan.com).



# The Seventh List



# Prologue



Uluru.

It's without doubt Australia's most revered and recognizable natural landmark. If you live on that very large island, you have either been to it, or seen its photograph, most likely.

Her fame stretches all around the world, making Uluru one of Australia's most popular tourist attractions, visited by tens of thousands of people every year, most of whom will walk away awed by the jaw dropping beauty and sheer size of the thing.

If the dictionary had pictures for words, the one for 'gargantuan' would have a photo of Uluru.

Only when you are standing close do you come to realise how unbelievably enormous she actually is, and how Uluru completely contradicts the flatness of the surrounding desert. She's an enigma, and a mighty one at that.

Three hundred and forty-eight metres high, 9000 metres in circumference at its base, 'Ayers Rock,' as she was previously more commonly known – is actually a giant piece of hardened arkose sand. She is the tip of a kilometres deep reef of arkose, as if she were an iceberg, the ice replaced by the reddish, rock-hard sand.

Uluru is a very special place, especially for those who have worshipped and adored her, for longer than most have inhabited planet Earth: the indigenous Australians.

\* \* \*

Most of us have secrets by the time we reach adulthood, and we continue creating them as we grow older, some more than others.

Some secrets we will all spend the rest of our life trying to forget, and hope they are never discovered.

Uluru has secrets as old as time itself. Only a handful of locals in this present day are privy to them, for a very good reason.

You see, reader, if these secrets became public knowledge, to the outside world, it could threaten the very existence of Uluru itself, not to mention that of the people who live around her.

They could threaten you and me.

These secrets have remained safely shielded from the light of day for thousands of years.

Until now.

0:00:01



Late 2012.

The Russian glanced down to his Rolex, a custom build, made especially for a man with a wrist akin to a tree trunk. He grew anxious for his next appointment to get under way, keen to discuss the matters at hand. The watch, rumoured to cost over a million, matched the money choking his opulent office. Crammed with priceless antique furniture, it was as if Buckingham Palace had held a garage sale, and he had purchased everything except the kitchen sink.

The walls of the office overlooking Khokhlovskaya Square in downtown central Moscow were full to the brim with artwork most would only see in one of Europe's premier museums or art galleries.

Vadislav Privaca had money to burn. As CEO of Pravicon Industries, Russia's second-largest mining and resources company, his current personal wealth was a cool 39.25 billion dollars.

Vadislav was the undisputed model of the modern Russian billionaire, who, like many others, had taken full and very profitable advantage of the end of communist Russia in the early 1990s.

He was 6'6" in height, with 130 kilograms of proportioned weight and a big barrel-chest. His thick, black hair was trim

and well kept. His teeth were straight and very white. Coupled with an impeccable dress sense, his looks made him the pin-up boy of the Moscow super-rich.

To round off his overpowering aura, Vadislav's eyes were a result of a rare congenital condition – *aniridia*. The irises of his eyes were as jet black as his hair, and staring into them was nothing less than disconcerting.

Most avoided it where possible.

His favourite films were the *Godfather* trilogy. If he had a ruble for every time he had watched them, he could double his wealth.

Vadislav's personal secretary, Mikita, ushered in his appointment. 'Siamko Tuidiu,' she announced, even though the two men knew each other well.

Vadislav nodded, waving her off. Mikita was relieved – she would not have to stand in the same room as her boss's personal thug. She hated the way he looked at her. He was as grotesque as a gorilla.

Siamko wondered, not for the first time, if she was the hottest woman he had ever seen.

Vadislav greeted his morning appointment in his usual fashion, with a flick of his large, meaty hand. Siamko stared at his cup of tea. If there was one thing he hated, it was this God-awful English Breakfast tea. But he would never dare show his disdain, and had suffered through countless meetings sipping what he compared in his imagination to warm camel's wee.

Contrary to his thoughts on tea, Siamko's grey, dull eyes were alive. His ears wiggled with excitement and, as they had long ago been hacked off in a street fight and re-attached by a backyard surgeon, this was something of a feat. His most recent trip to Mexico City where he had, in addition to blowing Vadislav's money on broads and blow, uncovered more evidence of Vadislav's obsession: the Akashic Record.

Eighteen months earlier, Vadislav had learned, from the underground movement of whackos across the world, of the Akashic Record, a book that can tell you the time and date of death of anyone living, right down to the second. Some believed the Akashic Record was the second of three books in the set of three known as the Akashic Records; the first, a register of previous lives and the third, you guessed it, of future lives.

Many dismissed such things as a complete load of rubbish, but Vadislav was convinced the Akashic was not, and exhaustive research pointed to an ancient Mayan connection, leading Siamko, on Vadislav's behalf, to Mexico City.

Siamko leant forward in anticipation. 'This lead is like no other. The last place you'd ever have thought – but I'm sure it's correct.'

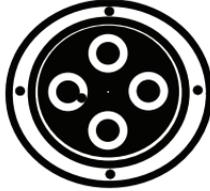
'Where is it?'

'Australia.'

Vadislav placed his cup back on its saucer. He rose to his feet and towered over his subordinate, buttoning the jacket of his customised Armani suit. 'Call me when you get there, comrade.'



0:00:02



Ross' mind drifted to his rear view mirror. He watched the dust storm his truck created on the dirt road, and wondered what other storm was coming up on his horizon, metaphorically speaking, that is. Something in the way Jimmy had asked him to come over had him worried.

The eyes, aqua-blue, had come from his mum for sure: a true copy. They were set between a healthy nose, a relaxed and great smile. His mop of blond hair, generally kept at a crew-cut, was similar to his father's well-kept mane. At 6'4", his height also came from his pop. Ross was a respectable 102 kilos, near perfect for his height. He was a keen Australian Rules football fan, and had played for the local competition most of his life. His job, flying helicopters, was what his Dad did for the same company he worked for, and ensured he kept in good shape.

Ross generally found romance around every corner, if he was looking. His robust, country-boy looks, coupled with a friendly, easy-going nature, was a sure-fire hit with the opposite sex. But his love of flying helicopters was an Achilles' heel for a long-term relationship. His restless nature, his need to fly choppers all over the world, came well before the thought of getting hitched.

Ross hit a pothole and the F150 pulled to the left. The 1991 Ford was one of Ross's favourite things in life. He corrected

and slowed to turn on to the Lasseter Highway. A few minutes later, he made the easy turn into Giles Road. Another twenty metres or so and the gates of Merrigang were before him.

Jimmy's place.

His father's name was Bernie, but he was the spitting image of Australia's rock legend, Jimmy Barnes. Long ago, Ross had called him Barnesy and the nickname Jimmy was born.

Some five acres of desert, a mixture of native trees with a large cluster of them surrounding the small house, Merrigang was named after the Aboriginal word for the dingo. As he came through the gates, his Dad's kelpies, Curly and Razor, raced from the shed. They knew the familiar F150 well, and loved their owner's son.

Ross opened the ute door and patted the dogs who were jumping over each other to get at him. He had to push them away to get his feet on the ground. He nodded to his old man, standing on the top step of the veranda that flanked two-thirds of his house, front and sides.

'Jimmy.'

'Roscoe.'

'How are you Pop, all right?'

Jimmy nodded over at the F150. 'Time for that leap-year wash, huh?'

'Sure.'

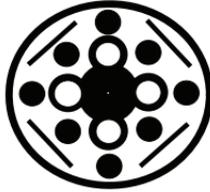
The two men stood uneasily, one at the top of the stairs, the other at the bottom. A few seconds passed. This is getting weird, Ross thought.

Jimmy took a step back and waved his son up to the veranda. 'We need to talk, son.'

'Jesus Christ,' Ross muttered under his breath. Jimmy never called him 'son' unless it was serious.

Damn serious.

0:00:03



Mikita watched Siamko stride off down the hall, throw open the door to the central office area of Pravicon Headquarters and disappear from view. There was nothing she liked about Siamko. She often wondered what stank more, his body odour, his cheap cologne, or his halitosis. He would stare at her, as most men did, flashing those sand-coloured, awful teeth.

Mikita believed Siamko was beast in a human suit, albeit a short one. Apart from those ugly ears, the over-large head and beady eyes too close together, his body resembled that of an ape. His arms were thicker than his legs, his shoulders too wide, his torso big but solid and always struggling to be constrained by his hideously cheap suits. The rumour around the executive office at Pravicon was that Siamko utilised a ‘third sock’, as if it were a cricketer’s box...

The thing she hated about him most of all was simple and succinct. He was an old fashioned, sexist thug, who, she was sure, did whatever Vadislav demanded – anything.

Mikita was the antithesis of Siamko.

Beauty, personified.

Standing at a mere 5’2”, her curvaceous figure, sparkling green eyes, and blonde hair with an almost perfect, year-round tan, had men eating out of the palm of her petite, little, hand.

Vadislav was introduced to Mikita in Paris – at a Gala Ball held by a friend and business partner. As their conversation broke the five-minute mark, he discovered her Russian background, at the seven-minute mark; her love of Moscow, and by the ten-minute mark, Vadislav had found his new personal secretary.

Mikita stole one more glance down the hall and with no one around, pulled her compact out and, partially hidden by the neat pile of files on her desk, checked herself in its mirror. She flicked her thumb across the keypad, using her free hand to casually tidy her hair.

The little screen flickered. *Report.*

*New location: Australia.*

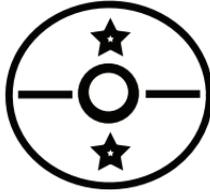
*Repeat.*

Mikita could not believe it either.

*Australia. Report over.*

She snapped the compact shut and made her way back to Vadislav's office to clear the items from morning tea. She picked up the custom-made china cups and jug, placing them on the ludicrously expensive silver platter – another Sotheby's relic, circa 1700, from the Italian Royal Family. She stole a very secret grin as she picked up the sugar bowl. This little item was actually Mikita's own, a faultless replica of the one Vadislav had purchased from some over-priced South African auction house. This one, with the world's most efficient microchip bug, was only a year old, and made on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea...

0:00:04



Ross walked up the three steps of the veranda. Against the house sat the outside couch, the place he'd spent hundreds of hours sitting with Jimmy and their collective mates. The couch had weathered storms, some in the sky; it had seen a shit-load of magnificent Territorian sunsets, lived through the dust of wirly wirlies and survived to perform its job, some near twenty years on – perfectly.

Jimmy was already in his 'spot', the armrest displaying an indentation that would match his bicep and forearm (the right hand would be holding a can of Carlton Draught, Jimmy's favourite beer for as long as Ross could remember). Unless he was away flying, no one ever dared sit there.

To the right of the brown corduroy couch was the sleekest portable fridge ever built. When your best friend owns the pub not far up the road, you're assured of one thing – a perpetual supply of beer; the esky was rarely, if ever, empty. At night it locked up as if it was a bank vault. Ross sat on his habitual side, stealing a quick glance at his father as he walked past him.

The setting sun bathed Uluru in a postcard-perfect orange hue. No matter how many times the Taylors had seen it, (probably thousands), they still loved watching the changing colours at this time of night and the sunset never failed to shut at least

one of them up for a few seconds. Tonight though, the alarm bells in Ross's head were going bananas. There hadn't been *this* much silence since the day his mother died.

That had been a dreadfully hot day, the day his mother passed away, the tarmac at the airport had appeared to be melting at the corners, the smell invaded Ross's throat, stuck to his clothes. His mum had been ill for weeks. It had struck her down hard. What was harder, the quacks had no idea how to cure it. When Ross reached his old man that fateful day, he experienced Jimmy's silence going on longer than he could stand. Then his father said, 'Nineteenth day of February 2002. Three forty-four and forty seconds,' and Ross saw something he had never seen before, his father crying. He knew at that moment – his mother was gone...

Ross finished the can of beer about 10 times quicker than normal.

'Thirsty, boy?'

Ross only nodded and helped himself to another. He was very thirsty, and very nervous.

Bernie Taylor was famous for being able to tell a good yarn. After telling Ross of sleepless nights, waking up in pools of sweat, migraines more powerful than a stick of dynamite, Jimmy came to the crux of the matter, the reason he wanted to see Ross tonight.

'February eighth, 1971. We flew the Huey out of the base at Nui Dat, in the Phuoc Tuy Province. I was one of the first Ninth Squadron chopper pilots to fly a Huey, converted into a gunship. The orders were to medivac a bunch of soldiers who had taken a beating and were in all sorts of trouble.'

Jimmy sat forward and rubbed the nape of his neck and then continued:

'It took two long hours to arrive at the rendezvous point. The scene was horrifying, for Christ's sake, men blown into

pieces, death in every direction, mayhem. The last remaining soldiers still in one piece – were doing the best they could to fight off the enemy. Our machine guns onboard buzzed endlessly, spraying anything below that looked like the Vietcong. Son,’ Jimmy shook his head in despair, ‘they were fucken everywhere. Then, out of nowhere, we we’d been hit. We were close to the ground and the chopper lurched to one side, and I mean hard. A second later, my co-pilot’s head exploded; glass, bits of his brain and blood flew across the cockpit, all over me.’

Jimmy took a long swig of beer.

‘I got the Huey on the ground and thought; at any second that little fucker of a sniper who took out my co-pilot would do the same to me. I heard shouts and then the last surviving men were at the chopper. Six soldiers scurried into the cabin, fuck, arms and legs flying in all directions. Suddenly, six became five. A young fella took a direct hit just below his Adam’s apple, blood showering the other guys and the interior of the Huey. Shit.’

Jimmy closed his eyes and muttered, ‘I still to this day remember the God-awful sound of a human skull hitting steel and cracking open like a walnut.’

The story dragged on for another thirty painstaking minutes. Ross was drifting off by the time Jimmy finally drew it to an end. ‘When the chopper crashed, I was knocked out. When I came to ... there were these voices, coming from ... somewhere.’ Jimmy leant forward and made eye contact with his son. ‘I was told ... that day was the day I was to die. But if I agreed to a certain deal, I would be allowed to live much longer.’

Ross’s beer nearly fell out of his hand. ‘What the hell?’

‘I thought of your pregnant mother, and of you. The choice was easy.’

Ross nodded; atrophy, possibly, setting in. He wasn’t sure he knew what the fuck his father was talking about.

Jimmy leant forward. 'Son, I chose to live, to take care of you all.' He hesitated, wiping the top crease of his forehead. 'But, I knew one day, I knew this day would come.'

Ross frowned. 'What day?'

Jimmy could see the fear in Ross's eyes. 'I'm sorry, son.' There was no easy way to say what he had to say, so he just came straight out with it. 'I have a brain tumour. It's too deep for them to be able to do anything about it ...'

'No bloody way,' Ross shouted, standing up and putting his hands on his hips in protest, kicking his beer over. 'How long, how long do they say you have?'

'A month, maybe two.' Jimmy closed his eyes and swallowed hard.

Ross walked to the railing of the veranda and shook his head. 'Fuck, this is not happening,' he shouted into the desert. Eventually, he looked back at his father.

Jimmy waved him back to the couch. 'There's something else I need to tell you, Ross.' His eyes narrowed. 'Come on, sit down.'