The bouncing headlights of the car driving across the layback caught his peripheral vision. Davinder glanced up from his book to see the splash of light from those same headlights enlarging across the glass façade of the PetroMart as the car bypassed the line of vacant pumps and eased nose first into one of the marked parking bays - just in front of the rack of lubricants. After bookmarking and closing his text, he pushed the Home button on his phone lying beside the cash register, noting the time as 2:41am December 25th.

The car headlights died with the motor, and as the driver’s door opened, Davinder instinctively reached under the counter in front of him - his fingers wrapping around the handle of the baseball bat he kept there. Just in case.

The automatic glass door rumbled open, the slight air turbulence ruffling the few hastily hung lengths of tinsel adorning the doorway, and the young male car driver walked in, wearing faded jeans – and, somewhat disconcertingly for Dav, a hoodie that obscured his head. Dav’s fingers tightened on the baseball bat but relaxed again when the customer pulled back the hoodie, smiled and nodded a greeting. Nevertheless, Dav watched carefully as the driver ambled through the few aisles, searching.

‘Can I help you?’ Dav called out. It had been a quiet shift since starting about six hours earlier, and he’d absorbed quite a few chapters of his book but, a sale was a sale, and the PetroMart owner expected staff to sell anything and everything. There was not a lot of margin in petrol sales alone.

‘Er, yeah mate. I’m wondering if you sell any women’s perfumes?’ car driver asked hopefully. ‘I was lying in bed and remembered I hadn’t got my future Mother-in-law anything for Christmas. My girlfriend’ll kill me if I don’t turn up with anything.’

Dav stared at the customer in disbelief before answering slowly but politely - ‘You do realise this is a PetroMart?’

‘Yeah, I know, but I’m desperate… I was hoping there’d be something last-minute I could get her. I was driving around looking for some place that might be open when I saw your lights on.’

Dav decided that it was time for some fun. ‘Well, we’ve got bunches of flowers that probably won’t last until sunrise, jerry cans for mower fuel, some sausage rolls in the warmer with a sell by of 2 days ago - or perhaps a cheese and pickle sandwich that might send her to hospital. But no perfume, I’m afraid.’

‘Bugger!’ car driver exclaimed morosely.

‘How about a packet of cream biscuits?’ Dav suggested hopefully.

‘Jeez mate, I don’t want to spend that much!’ car driver replied, getting into the spirit. ‘Anyway, shouldn’t you be at home with your family, getting ready for Santa to come instead of waiting for the occasional customer?’

‘I would’ve thought this was a dead give-away’ Dav replied, pointing towards his head.

Car driver looked confused, his brow creased.

Dav sighed. ‘Black beard, turban on head - ring any bells? I’m a Sikh, we don’t always do a Christian Christmas like you do.’

‘Really? Wow. Didn’t know that. So, how come you’re working here at this time of night anyway?’ car driver asked, warming to the conversation.

‘Need the money to get me through Uni mate - and I can’t afford a taxi licence’ Dav replied, the sarcasm clearly lost on his customer.

‘I must say, you speak just like an Aussie. What are you studying at Uni?’

‘I was born here mate, so I am an Aussie’ Dav explained, not for the first time in his life, ‘…and I’m studying this…’ Dav sighed, holding up his textbook.

Car driver leaned in closer to read the cover ‘Principles of Quantum Physics eh? Good luck with that. Well, if you haven’t got any perfume…’

‘You could try the All-Night Pharmacy three blocks down’ Dav suggested helpfully.

‘Oh, right, thanks’ car driver said, turning towards the exit. Just as glass door rumbled open, he turned to Dav and said ‘Have a Merry Chris… ah, sorry, forgot. Have a nice evening’ before disappearing through the open doorway.

‘Yeah, have a Merry Christmas yourself - and good luck finding perfume. Please come again’ Dav replied quietly before opening his textbook.

‘Now where was I?’