

# Synopsis for Stall Turns

By Penelope Haines

## 2-line Summary:

Pilot Claire Hardcastle returns in her third adventure. Her chance discovery of human remains sets in train a mystery involving secrets, murder and a touch of romance.

## Short Synopsis:

Pilot Claire Hardcastle returns in her third adventure. Claire is on holiday when she finds human remains in a swamp.

The next day she meets two brothers in search of their father who disappeared a year earlier. Another exciting adventure filled with secrets, murder and a touch of romance.

## Longer Synopsis:

Pilot Claire Hardcastle returns in her third adventure. Claire is on holiday when she finds human remains in a swamp. She's visiting a relative's farm to take part in the muster, held every spring.

However, also on the muster are two brothers in search of their father, who disappeared a year earlier. He'd been a guest at the same lodge they are currently staying at and vanished without trace at the end of his visit. Could the corpse in the swamp be his?

Another exciting adventure filled with secrets, murder and a touch of romance.

## Medium Synopsis:

Pilot Claire Hardcastle returns in her third adventure!

When Claire stumbles over human remains in a swamp, she and her partner are happy to leave police to handle the matter and continue with their holiday. The next day she meets two brothers in search of their father who disappeared a year earlier. Are the two events connected?

Over a few exciting days Claire has to survive an increasingly dangerous series of adventures while uncovering the mystery of whose body was hidden in the swamp, and why a luxury hunting lodge in New Zealand, catering to international celebrities, has become embroiled in violent crime.

## Long Synopsis:

Pilot Claire Hardcastle, and her police detective boyfriend Jack Body become lost while trying to find the site of their holiday destination – Jack’s uncle Pat’s farm, where they’ll be joining the Labour Day muster, held every spring.

Jack goes in search of directions on a farm that we later discover is the exclusive and upmarket Retakure Lodge. Meanwhile, Claire goes exploring in the area immediately surrounding their vehicle when she accidentally wades into a swamp and stumbles across a human skeleton

She and Jack are happy to leave the problem to the police, but the next day on the muster they meet two brothers, Lee and Ray who are searching for their father Zhang, who went missing in mysterious circumstances a year earlier.

When they hear Claire has discovered a body, and that her partner Jack is an off-duty detective, the brothers are quick to try and enlist their help in uncovering whether these are their father’s remains.

Unexpectedly, a major earthquake strikes during the muster and all other considerations become irrelevant. Two men are injured, one seriously, and a major rockfall has dammed the river upstream. The potential for a catastrophic flood when the dam breaks is enormous.

The brothers have been staying at the same luxurious hunting lodge their father previously patronized, and the lodge helicopter flies the injured men to hospital. Claire is persuaded to join them and stay at the Lodge until Jack picks her up.

Regrettably, the earthquake caused other damage in the area and a road blockage means Jack is unable reach Claire that evening. She spends the night as a guest of the Lodge and is introduced to the other resident personnel.

While studying a display of photographs depicting rich and famous visitors to the Lodge, Claire realises Zhang was a guest, and that a year earlier he’d been on the same muster. Pat had said the guests had been quarrelling. Did this relate to Zhang’s disappearance?

Later, sleepless, Claire goes downstairs to borrow a book and overhears a conversation between the pilot Brett, and an unknown person. Brett says he lied and the context is clear this relates to the remains she’d found. But what had he lied about? And why?

It seems the answer to the mystery of Zhang’s disappearance lies at the Lodge.

An invitation from Charles, the Lodge’s owner brings all the previous day’s muster participants to the Lodge for dinner. The invitation is positioned as an opportunity to meet his neighbours and as a thanks to those who helped his guests, Lee and Ray, after the earthquake the previous day.

Later, when the visitors take their leave they discover the impromptu dam jamming the river has burst, causing severe flooding and washing out the bridge, the only route out of valley, forcing them to return to the Lodge to spend the night.

Frantic to return to his own farm, Pat and the others go on a recce and ascertain they can get their 4WD's through ancient, overgrown forestry tracks. While the men drive out over the dangerous route, Claire and Pat's wife Joanne are left behind. Brett will fly them back to the farm later.

Jack warns Claire to curb her curiosity and stay with Joanne, but responding to a request from Mary, the housekeeper, Claire is lured to a bunker where she is knocked unconscious and shut in with the decomposing remains of a corpse.

Claire is terrified she will never be discovered, but Joanne and Brett find and free her. He intends to fly them to safety but an attack from Wu forces Joanne and Claire escape and seek help at a neighbouring forestry block. Unfortunately, the owner Paul intends to dispose of the women. They're drugged and left to die of hypothermia, but Joanne and Claire manage to survive by a heroic struggle to the shelter of an aircraft hangar. They are discovered when Paul and Wenjun arrive at the hangar in the early morning. Paul forces Claire to pilot a disabled aircraft intending she and Joanne die in a convenient plane accident.

Claire's competence as a pilot ensures that against the odds they survive, and she is reunited with Jack

### **Points of Interest about the Book's Content or Story:**

Penelope was fortunate to spend several years working as a light aircraft pilot and instructor, flying out of Paraparaumu Airport. It was inevitable that she would one day use that beautiful and dynamic environment as a background in her novels.

The character of Claire first appeared in *Death on D'Urville*, then again in *Straight and Level*, and is an amalgam of women pilots Penelope met during her flying years. As a breed they are sassy, courageous and confident women. Penelope hopes this series pays tribute to them. Although gender equality has meant an increasing number of women choosing aviation as a career, they make up only a small proportion of the overall number of pilots, a fact Penelope still finds surprising.

Penelope realised early on that there were simply too many stories and adventures centred round aviation to contain them all in one novel, so a series was born.

## **Book Details and Purchase Information**

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