



*'After the Storm', Steffie Wallace, oil on panel*

*'This morning, I want you to think about your drinking and drugging.'  
There is an appreciative titter from the group. The counsellor leans forward on her chair looking  
at the faces of the women who sit in a half-circle around her.  
'I want you to think about what it was like before you were drinking and drugging, what happened,  
and what it is like now.'  
Before, during, after. I don't want to think about my drinking, thinks Em, I want to  
think about Dylan.'*

This is Em's introduction to treatment for her alcoholism coupled with the stark recognition that she has a drinking problem. And it is the experience of motherhood which has brought her to her knees; its joyous fulfilment having culminated in heartbreak.

Her addiction has taken her from a comfortable middle class existence into a women's rehabilitation centre on the outskirts of Melbourne. She is forced to look long and hard at the circumstances which have brought her here and meets Mar, an artist currently employed in an anti-drug advertising campaign at the centre. Not without her own problems, Mar sustains a dream of being a successful painter. Em introduces her to Phoebe, her niece, who is studying art and design. Despite their age differences and diverse personalities, the women bond in a friendship which continues beyond the confines of the treatment centre.

Set in Melbourne and Port Douglas in the late 1980s, the story traces their separate journeys over a year-long period through grief and despair to new and positive directions.

## **Confronting and illuminating'**

**For those struggling with addiction, this is a story of recovery...  
For those struggling with grief, this is a story of hope...**

**'This novel is highly commended', Professor David Penington AC**

*Cover design by the author*