

## Chapter Two.

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The first to attack had four inches on Fisher. He split from the other coppers and came swinging in from the left, the nasty end of his police baton cutting the air.

Fisher dropped and swung his balled fist upward.

The copper tried to dodge, but he was graceless, slow.

Fisher drove his fist hard into the copper's groin and followed through, pushing as much weight behind his fist as possible.

The copper grunted. He stopped dead. His eyes crossed and he dropped to his knees, the baton and Fisher forgotten.

None of the other uniformed coppers had forgotten Fisher.

Two came rushing forward, while a third tried to circle around the back of Fisher. Their batons were held high, swinging.

Hunching down, his eyes narrowed and looking for the next movement, Fisher pivoted and put his weight on the back foot. He narrowed his eyes and focused on them both, making a decision in a split second.

The copper to Fisher's right was heavier set, broader in the shoulder and looked like she'd be harder to put down, pound-for-pound. The copper to the left was tall, thin, little muscle in his arms, but he had plenty of reach.

Fisher picked the left and rushed forward. Leading with his shoulder he hit the tall copper in the knees and drove forward,

pushing as if he were a scrum-half in a Rugby match.

The copper let out a surprised yelp as he toppled backward and dropped onto his back.

Fisher rolled off the downed man and kicked the dropped baton out of reach. He turned and balled both of his fists ready for the next assault.

It wasn't going to happen straight away.

The two standing coppers looked at him as though they were watching a circus freak that'd just bitten the head off a chicken. They looked to each other, then to the detective for some kind of guidance.

*This* wasn't supposed to happen. One man versus four coppers was supposed to be an easy job, no real resistance.

Fisher liked to give surprises as much as he liked receiving them.

"Well?" he asked the confused officers.

That broke them out of their freeze. They came at him, slower this time, watching him like a dog watches a cornered cat.

The female officer was the braver of the two. She stepped out a little ahead of her colleague. She teased the air with the end of her baton.

"You won't catch me off guard you slippery little shit," she said.

Fisher took that as a dare. He hadn't wanted to waste his morning tussling with coppers. He hadn't wanted his morning to be filled with death either, but now he was here and in the swing of things, he

couldn't help himself. Too many years of training had hard-wired his body for action.

*Any* action.

He was a hair-trigger.

And someone had pulled that trigger when they killed Omera.

"Sure about that?" Fisher said, circling left to match the copper's advances.

"You touch me, mate, and I'll knock yer bloody head off," she said, waving the baton to make her point.

Fisher smiled.

He took a jerky step forward.

The copper was slow just like the first. A second, maybe two passed before she jumped back away from Fisher's body.

It was all he needed.

Fisher hunkered down as if he were a sprinter ready to leave the blocks.

The copper tensed, the baton held in a striking position.

Fisher faked a jump forward.

The copper swung her baton.

There was no faking now, Fisher leaped forward and caught the edge of the baton in the crook of his arm. He twisted, bringing the copper across his hip.

She tumbled forward, arms flailing as she tried to get some purchase. But it was no use. She hit the floor hard with her shoulder and let out a shriek.

"Told you," Fisher said, as he tossed the baton aside.

The copper rolled left, right, her good arm cradling the broken one. She cursed him out, but those curses were just hot air, she couldn't hurt him now.

Fisher stepped over her and faced the remaining two.

"Your move," he said, knowing what that move would be. They couldn't just leave him alone now. He would have to take them all out, even the detective when she decided to act. There was no way out of this until all five of the coppers were out for the count, and even then he wasn't safe, he knew that. The detective had his card. Phone calls would be made. Before this ended he would be a wanted man; at least in Sydney.

Too late to go back now. Omera was dead, he had twenty-four hours to make any kind of headway in finding her killer. And he had to make those hours count.

"Hurry up, I haven't got all day," Fisher said.

The two coppers stepped forward as though they were walking through a minefield toward an unexploded bomb. The skinny one looked as though he might be sick at any moment. The other looked as if he wanted to chew on Fisher's bones and spit out the marrow.

Fisher knew which one he would go for first.

He pointed a finger at the *eater of bones*.

"One on one, no stick, just you and me," he said.

"You want that, mate, you can have it," the copper said, He tossed aside the baton, undid his belt and handed it to his skinny colleague.

"What are you doing?" Skinny said.

"Stand back and I'll teach this effin mongrel he can't just..." The bone-eater stopped dead in his tracks, a big grin on his face.

Fisher felt a tingle of doubt run up across his back. What did this copper have to smile about? Was he that cocksure of beating Fisher in a fight? How could he be—

It wasn't doubt that had run a finger across Fisher's back.

"You had your fun now, mate? Wanna stop all this macho bullshit before someone gets really hurt?"

It was Detective Betty Addison who spoke.

It was Detective Betty Addison who was prodding something hard and gun-shaped into Fisher's back.

"Shit," Fisher said, his fists unclenching.

"You're in it, mate," the detective said, "now you just be a good boy and let's see you put those hands above your head, okay? No fancy moves, you hear me?"

He heard, but it didn't stop Fisher from thinking he could fight his way out of the situation.

If he pivoted just right, if he caught the copper's hand and took the gun then—

The detective pushed the gun deeper into Fisher's back.

"That's a reminder," she said, "the next time I won't be as gentle. So let's see those hands now, up high like you're reaching for something off the top shelf."

Slow, still looking for an opportunity, Fisher raised his hands above his head.

"I don't suppose you're going to be lenient on me, are you?"

She snorted a laugh through her nose.

"You assaulted two officers and you were about to do the same with the other two, what do you think is going to happen next?"

Fisher shrugged.

"You could let me off with a warning," he said, his voice rife with sarcasm.

"Yeah, and I could go swimming in a meat bikini off the Reef too, but it's not likely, mate. Turn around, make it slow."

Fisher didn't move.

This was his last chance and he knew it. Last chance to escape a visit to the cells and all the embarrassing explanations that would follow. If he refused to move, then she would have to use force. She would have to shift position. Once she was moving, Fisher had a chance to catch her off guard, to get out of all this.

"Did you hear me, I said—"

"I heard," Fisher said.

"And you're refusing, is that what you're saying to me?"

"That's what I'm doing," Fisher said.

The gun dropped away from Fisher's back.

A noise filled the air.

It was a clicking sound. Familiar. Sickeningly familiar to Fisher.

"Did you hear that?" the Detective asked.

"I heard."

"I'm guessing from the way you handled yourself out there, you're probably familiar with what it is I have in my hand?"

"I'm familiar."

"So, let me ask you again, do you still refuse to turn around so I can put the handcuffs on you?"

Fisher tensed all over.

That sound was worse than any other he'd heard in his life. Especially once you'd been on the receiving end of the little monster the detective held in her hand.

A bullet could kill you, no doubt, but at least you would be out of your misery.

Being zapped by an electric stun-gun was a whole level of pain that Fisher never wanted to experience again. He'd seen one of those

things reduce the toughest of bodyguards to a quivering jelly. And he was no exception.

"You wouldn't use that thing on me, would you?" Fisher said.

"I would and I will if you don't start co-operating with me, Mr. Fisher."

"Okay, okay, I'm turning around right now. Just don't hit me with that thing, alright?"

"No promises," she said.

It wasn't the answer Fisher wanted to hear.

He sucked in a breath and began his slow turn toward the detective. He was halfway around when a face appeared.

It was the first copper he'd dropped. The copper he'd hit in the groin.

He had an electric stun-gun in his hand.

He smiled.

Fisher brought his hands down instinctively to stop the attack, but it was too late.

As one bolt of electricity hit him from the front, another jolt hit him in the small of his back.

He jerked like a fish dropped into a boat.

A line of spittle dropped from the corner of Fisher's mouth. The world pulsed and flashed around him. From his toes to the top of his head every nerve was on fire and screaming to be put out.



The Opera House flashed before his eyes, doubled up like some strange magic-eye picture. And then he was falling, falling. Blue sky above him, the hard ground beneath. And superimposed over it all, the body of a woman he'd once loved.

A dead body.

Then there was nothing but blackness.