

Chapter Three.

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Omera Fontaine's voice was the only thing he could hear in the blackness.

She wasn't singing *Ah! je veux vivre*, the aria with which she was most associated, but a show tune.

Years before, when he'd first heard her singing in a nightclub in London's West End she'd been doing show tunes. Belting out those tunes for the half-drunk patrons of a bar that served only as a gateway to other, more carnal pursuits on the floor above.

Fisher had managed to get her out of there and onto something better. He would never have guessed she'd end up a world renowned Opera star. Or that one day he would look upon her dead body laid out on the steps of the Sydney Opera House.

The song continued in the blackness. Words and lyrics.

It's rather dull in town, I think I'll take me to Paree.

Mmmmmm.

The mistress wants to open up

The castle in Capri.

A wave of nausea passed over Fisher as he heard that voice and realised he would never see the owner again. It was as if he'd woken up on the deck of a ship. A ship caught in the worst of storms.

*Someone's 'ead restin' on my knee,
Warm an' tender as 'e can be. 'ho takes good care of me,
Aow, wouldn't it be lovely?
Lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely*

He knew the name of the show, who wouldn't with such a famous song. *My Fair Lady*. It was the same song he'd first heard Omera sing on that first night they'd met.

There was nothing *lovely* about where he found himself now.

Fisher blinked and the darkness gave way to a bright white light.

He blinked again, bringing the world into something approaching clarity.

He was in a cell. The walls were a flaking green colour and marked with graffiti. A solid gun-metal grey door kept him inside. Set into the ceiling was a circular light that buzzed like a trapped insect.

Fisher swung his legs around and brought himself up from the slab of concrete that doubled as a bed.

The room spun around him.

Fisher held onto the side of his head to stop the spinning, but it went only so far. Once he'd managed to steady the room, his head started to bang. It was like a thunderstorm trapped beneath his eyes.

Bloody stun-guns!

He'd been zapped a few times before and it was always the same reaction. For days afterwards he had headaches, weird spasms of motion in his arms and worst of all, the nausea.

He could feel it coming back again, rising up like a tide from his stomach.

Fisher closed his eyes and took in a long, deep breath.

Hold still, he told himself. Hold still and ride this out. It will pass and everything will be right again.

Only he knew it wouldn't this time.

Omera was dead. There was no denying that, and no way of keeping still long enough for it to pass. She was dead and some bastard was out there walking free. Some bastard who'd—

How had she died anyway?

The first he'd known anything was wrong was when he'd received the call from her. That terrifying sound of her at the other end asking for help. A voice as beautiful as hers should have never been asking for help.

But there was nothing else to go on. Nothing concrete. She'd wanted help, she'd told him she would meet him outside the Opera House, but by the time he'd arrived she was dead and the police were already there.

Dead.

He saw her body again in his mind's eye. That frail thing curled up and lifeless on the steps of the famous building. It wasn't Omera

any longer. Not the Omera he'd known.

Known.

Fisher's stomach lurched.

He jumped up and positioned himself against the wall, one arm palm flat against the cold stone, his head hung low, mouth open ready for what would come next.

His mouth opened.

His stomach tightened.

There was nothing inside to come out. Fisher heaved and a dry hacking cough escaped his body, but nothing much more. He could feel his eyes tearing up, but that wasn't just the nausea.

Omera.

Omera was dead.

Whatever bastard had done this to her would pay. He swore it. He would catch them and—

Catch who, you fool? You're in some cell in the middle of a foreign city without a phone or anyway to get hold of anyone. Who are you going to find? They'll keep you in here, you know. Twenty-four hours will be nothing, and it's the weekend too. You better get comfortable because it'll be Monday before you get a chance to see daylight.

No, he couldn't allow that to happen. They had to give him a phone call at least, wasn't that how it worked, or was his post-electric shock mind getting reality and American TV shows mixed up?

He wasn't sure, but he knew he had to get out and soon if he wanted any chance of finding Omera's killer.

You don't have a chance in the world, he told himself. She's dead and whoever did it to her is long gone by now. Christ, you don't even know how she died yet. It might have been a random thing, a mugging or just some sicko who'd lost it and picked her out randomly. Could have been a crazed fan who went on and topped themselves after the act.

You know nothing, Fisher, and you can't act when you have nothing to go on.

But he couldn't just sit in the cell and wait this thing out. He couldn't just forget what Omera had meant to him, what he had meant to her and just let it all pass him by. She was dead, he was her friend, had been her lover, and he owed her.

His stomach a little less rebellious now, Fisher pushed himself away from the wall and wiped the spittle from his lips. He sucked in a breath and walking a little unsurely, he made it to the steel door.

"Hello," he tried to say, but his mouth was as dry as an old pair of socks and it came out as nothing more than a croak.

Fisher cleared his throat, licked his lips and tried again.

"Hey, anybody? I want my phone call in here. Hello, is there anybody out there?"

A silence as thick as a snowdrift answered.

Fisher leaned in closer to the door, pressed his face against the cold metal.

“Heloooo,” he shouted, “is there anybody out there? Hey, I demand my phone call. Do you hear me out there? I demand a phone call.”

Where had they put him? At the arse end of the loneliest cell block in the station? Didn't they have to have an officer on duty, patrolling the corridor, or at least listening out for anything that might be going wrong inside the cells? This wasn't the dark ages, coppers had to watch out for people committing suicide now or choking on their own vomit.

Unless they were ignoring him on purpose?

That made sense. He'd attacked a few coppers and everyone knew how closely knit coppers were. They were probably out there listening, laughing at him. Letting him stew.

Christ, yeah. It was only what he'd done a thousand times before with his prisoners.

Fisher couldn't help the smile that grew on his face.

He took a step back from the door.

“Okay, okay, go ahead and laugh,” he shouted, “you go ahead and have your fun, but let me tell you, I've got a lawyer out there who's part shark and he'll be making some calls if I don't check in. Once those calls are made you'll have to let me go.”

He expected something, a titter even to come from the other side, but there was that silence again.

Fisher's gut flipped and it had nothing to do with the post-electro shock nausea he'd been feeling. There was something wrong about the silence. He remembered the lines from those old films when the soldiers would hit a path of silence like this.

“Too quiet,” Fisher whispered to himself.

But what could possibly happen in a police station in the middle of a busy, modern city?

Plenty of things, Fisher thought. It wasn't like the police force didn't have its fair share of psychopaths and sadists. There were still plenty of unexplained deaths in police cells all over the world.

But they couldn't possibly be planning that for him, could they? He hadn't upset them that much, had he?

He remembered the detective's face. She'd been tough, sure, but not angry. Not a sadist. Not someone who would—

A shadow cut through the light at the bottom of the door.

A footstep echoed out in the corridor beyond the cell.

Fisher's body relaxed. He stepped up to the steel door, close enough so that they would hear him without a problem on the other side.

“About bloody time,” he said, “how about you let me out now and I can make my phone call?”

Silence, but not empty silence. It was the kind of quiet where you could tell, even without hearing, that there was someone there, and breathing.

“Hey, did you hear me out there? I want my phone call, and I want it now,” he said.

Another set of footsteps echoed out in the hallway.

Fisher stepped back in time to see a new shadow join the first in the light beneath the door.

What the hell was going on out there? Why were they ignoring him? If this was to punish him for hitting the copper in the groin then it wasn't too inventive.

"Okay, fun's over. Just get me my bloody lawyer on the phone will you," Fisher said.

There was chatter from the other side of the door. Indistinct, low.

"This isn't funny anymore," he said.

And it wasn't getting any funnier as the moments passed and the chatter grew and Fisher's gut hardened into rock.

This was wrong, all wrong, and it wasn't the kind of wrong that coppers got involved with. They weren't too subtle when it came to revenge or punishment.

Then who was out there, Fisher wondered? Who could it be that would play this kind of mind game? And why?

The chattering stopped. One of the shadows moved away leaving one shadow alone outside the cell door.

Finch waited, his body tensing more and more with every silent moment that passed. He was alert now, the nausea forgotten, his instincts sharp and ready for anything that might be thrown his way.

But he still couldn't figure out what that *something* might be.

His answer came moments later.

A panel at the top of the door slid open. A pair of piercing blue

eyes appeared on the opposite side of the panel.

Then the voice.

Commanding, refined, without any humour.

“You have something we want, Mr. Fisher. I hope you’ll co-operate with us, as we don’t want to hurt you. Not if we don’t have to.”