

PROLOGUE

One foot inside the apartment, the smell hit her. Sour, like cat pee. Except they didn't own a cat.

"Sean?" she called, her voice cracking. She cleared her throat. "Sean, honey, are you home?" Louder this time.

Not a sound. Only that putrid smell.

She dumped her heavy satchel on the floor, kicked the door closed, and surveyed the room.

The late afternoon sun streamed through the balcony-facing floor-to-ceiling windows. Long shadows from the life-sized, headless bronze nudes standing sentry sliced the living area. *The Age* newspaper lay open at the business section in the middle of the narrow glass-topped dining table, Sean's mobile phone next to it. Apart from one of the eight chairs sitting askew from the table, she could have stepped into the pages of *Home Beautiful*.

She crossed the carpet toward the short hall that led to the bedrooms and stuck her head into the apartment's galley-style kitchen. Tomatoes, red onions and a cling-wrapped tray of meat – the makings of what looked to be one of her fiancé's specialties, Spanish steak – sat on the stainless steel drainer next to the sink. Further down the bench, she spotted a bottle of red wine together with two wine glasses, one of which was already poured. She sniffed the air and moved on.

Usually wide open, the door to the guest bedroom was half-closed. Hoping Sean hadn't offered a bed to one of his boozy

mates, she hesitated for a moment and then gave the door a sharp shove.

The door swung in, releasing a rush of sour air. Pinching her nostrils together, she leaned into the room, ready to beat a hasty retreat if anyone was in there. Her gaze went first to the queen-sized bed. Although the quilt looked rumpled, the bed itself didn't appear to have been slept in.

Breathing out through her mouth, she glanced across the bedroom to where sunlight, filtered through the window's upward angled Venetians, striped the ceiling.

She took another step into the room and turned around. The leather strap of her handbag slid from her shoulder. She didn't try to stop it, couldn't stop it. Unable to move, all she could do was gape at the open wardrobe, her eyes bulging almost as much as the vacant ones staring back at her.

A silent scream blocked her throat. She couldn't breathe in; she couldn't breathe out. Her lungs wanted to burst. The purple, bloated face of the naked man hanging from the wardrobe's steel rail on a belt, his swollen tongue protruding from his mouth, was almost unrecognisable. Almost.

She stumbled backwards, snaring her handbag as she landed in a heap next to the bed. She scrambled in the bottom of her bag, her mobile phone eluding her like wet soap in the bathtub. When she did manage to get hold of it, she struggled to still her shaking hands. Her fingers felt fat and clumsy, the buttons on her phone tinier than she remembered.

"Emergency. What service do you require? Police, Fire, Ambulance?"

She opened her mouth to answer, but a magazine page stuck to her leg now had her attention instead. She peeled it off, dangling the magazine at arm's length as if it were a dirty sock. She had

never seen anything quite like it. Naked flesh. Entwined bodies. Explicit sex scenes.

If she had thought things couldn't get any worse, she had thought wrong. She shook her head, unable to come to terms with what she was seeing. Her fiancé, her lover, her partner was dead; dead and surrounded with hard-core homosexual pornography.

1

Jemma Dalton rubbed her bare arms, wondering what it would take to convince her dour-faced taxi driver to adjust the air conditioning to something less than Antarctic. Deciding it wasn't worth the effort, she settled back in her seat and watched as the scenery rushed past; there one moment, gone the next. Like the people in her life.

She twisted the skin on the back of her hand, pinching it between her nails, needing the solace of physical pain. Anything to fill the void inside her. Losing her big sister – her only sister – had been devastating enough, but the coroner's finding of suicide had pushed her past the pain threshold.

According to what she had been told, her 35-year-old sister, Tanya Clark, had been so depressed after the death of her fiancé, Sean Mullins, and the manner in which he died, that she had taken her own life two months later. Despite there being no evidence to the contrary, Jemma didn't want to believe it. Not her sister.

The Melbourne city skyline loomed in the distance, reminding Jemma of the reason for her visit. Though Tanya's body had been flown to Perth and laid to rest beside their beloved mother, her essence was here; the place she had lived and worked for all her adult life.

Up ahead, a monumental yellow beam, cantilevered at a precarious angle, hung out over the freeway. On the other side, a line of giant, red sticks leaned toward it creating a portal:

Melbourne's gateway. When they passed through the sound tube on the other side, a 300-metre long steel ribcage, she knew she wasn't far from her destination.

What she hadn't counted on was getting caught in the gridlocked inner city traffic. By the time the taxi arrived outside the property manager's office, a suited, dark-haired man was locking up.

She leapt out of the taxi. "Please wait. I'll just be a minute."

From the look on the driver's face, she had asked him to cut off his right hand. Double-parked, he had no choice but to wait. Not if he wanted his fare. Besides, her luggage was still in the boot.

Dodging a group of Asian tourists taking photographs, she raced across the footpath. If she couldn't persuade the man in the suit to open up again, she would have to fork out for a hotel. That or sleep on the street.

Profuse apologies and some fast-talking had the desired result. A few minutes later, she had the key to her sister's rented apartment and a swipe card to access the building.

The taxi driver paid, her luggage unloaded, she set off.

Her mobile phone rang while she was humping her cases along the footpath. She ignored it, more intent on escaping the heat, traffic fumes and noise. She pushed on, perspiration matting her fringe to her forehead. Not much further...

Number 299. She shouldered through the thick glass entrance door, shoving her luggage ahead of her into the airlock separating the street from the building's lobby. She paused for breath. Nearly there.

She swiped her security card, unlocking the next set of glass doors. The cool, marble-tiled lobby was empty and still, the only sound the echo of her own sigh. No aeroplane hum. No traffic drone. No clanging trams. No ringing mobile phones.

A bank of brushed-steel fronted mailboxes occupied the wall to her left. To her right hung a mural-sized Aboriginal painting made up of thousands of white dots on a black background.

She heard a swish and looked around to see the doors of one of the two lifts part. A tall, angular-faced, brunette strode out toward the glass doors, her imaginary blinkers preventing even a cursory glance in Jemma's direction.

Jemma hauled her luggage into the vacated lift and pushed the button for the sixth floor. Seconds later, the doors opened. She stepped out, looking up and down the carpeted, windowless corridor for numbers.

Two doors down on her right she found apartment 367. Her mobile rang again just as she was inserting the key into the lock. She gritted her teeth and turned the key. Couldn't he take a hint? She wasn't ready to talk. Not yet.

A wall of hot, stuffy air hit her as she pushed the door in. The open-plan apartment was smaller and less grand than the one Tanya had lived in with her fiancé before he had hung himself. But compared to Jemma's one-bedroom ground floor unit in Perth, it was palatial.

She found the switch for the air conditioner on the wall to her left and flicked it on. Then, leaving her luggage at the door, she began to explore the apartment.

A black leather modular lounge suite, positioned to take advantage of the city views, dominated the off-white living room. Recessed in the wall, the entertainment unit, though large, was unobtrusive. The quirky, free-standing pewter and coloured glass upright in the corner provided both art and function.

The off-white theme carried through to the compact, internal kitchen, the laundry at the end more a cupboard than a room. She continued on, past a gleaming white-tiled bathroom, the towel rails bare.

Opposite it, on the other side of the hallway, a room she had hoped was the guest bedroom would have been a squeeze even for a single bed. Instead, Tanya had converted it to an office. A high-backed, leather CEO-style chair sat alone in the middle of the room, the butcher-block table pushed hard up under the window. A collection of large moving boxes was stacked against the adjacent wall.

Jemma's pulse quickened as she approached the open doorway at the far end of the hallway. She faltered, wondering if coming in person had been the wisest decision, after all. It wasn't too late. She could still turn around and leave.

She took a couple of fortifying breaths and crossed the threshold into the master bedroom. A faint antiseptic smell hung in the air. Her shoulders slumped. All bedding including the pillows had been stripped from the queen-sized bed, leaving just the bare mattress. The bedside tables held no personal items, only a fine layer of dust. Except for the cubist-style painting of two dragonflies above the bedhead, all trace of her sister had been wiped from the room. Life and death.

What had she expected? Some sort of shrine? A snapshot of Tanya's life imprinted in time? An explanation? What? Shaking her head, she backed out.

Her mobile phone rang, reverberating through the apartment. She rushed to silence it.

Ross. She couldn't avoid him forever. With a sigh, she pressed the answer button, but then didn't know what to say.

"Jemma? Can you hear me, Jem?"

"Loud and clear." She closed her eyes, wishing she couldn't.

"Why haven't you been returning any of my phone calls?"

She cupped her hands over the phone, somehow reluctant to disturb the sanctity of her sister's space. "I thought we had said all there was to say."

“Where are you? I called around to your place, but you weren’t there. You weren’t at work either. Is everything okay?”

No, it wasn’t bloody okay, but she wasn’t about to tell him that. Ross Gibson, her so-called boyfriend, hadn’t given her a second thought when he had jacked in his Perth job to join the exodus of workers some 1600 kilometres north to the mines. “Please don’t do this, Ross. Not now.”

“Don’t do what? We can work this out. I know we can. Hey, I’m sure there’s openings up here for IT people, too. Do you want—”

“Stop. Please.” It wasn’t so much that she hadn’t wanted to live in the middle of nowhere; it was that she hadn’t been consulted. Her priorities were different now. Her life was different. “You made your decision.”

“For us. For our future—” He broke off. “Hey, what’s all the racket? Where are you?”

While they had been talking, Jemma had unbolted the glass sliding door and walked out onto the shallow balcony. The sound of sirens filled the air, the surrounding high-rise apartments and office buildings tunnelling their wails. She waited a moment for it to abate. “New York.”

Silence, then, “Say what?”

“What does it matter where I am?” She could be anywhere in the world, doing anything, and who would be any the wiser?

“I thought we had something special happening.”

So did I, she thought. *Once*. A rhythmic whack-whacking sound drew her to the rail. Four players were engaged in a vigorous game of mixed doubles on one of the two tennis courts. The other was empty. “We’ve been over and over this. I’m sorry, Ross, but I just don’t have the energy for this right now.”

“So when will you be back from wherever you are?”

She spotted the glass-enclosed swimming pool almost directly below her and wished she had packed a swimsuit. “A few...” She paused. “I don’t know. Maybe never,” she said, voicing a thought that until then hadn’t crossed her mind.

“What’s got into you?” Panic tinged his voice. “You don’t sound like your old self.”

“Will you answer me one thing?”

“Sure. Fire away.”

“If I asked you to come back to Perth, would you?”

“I’m home now.”

“No, I don’t mean one week in eight. I mean back for good.”

“But, Jem, I’m earning three times what I was in Perth.”

“Goodbye, Ross. Have a nice life.” Hanging up, she retreated inside. She hadn’t told him about Tanya dying. She didn’t need his misplaced sympathies.

Another door had just closed.

Her skin felt gritty and tight after the flight. Perhaps a shower would help clear her mind, too. She found a supply of towels in the hall cupboard, along with sheets, blankets and a couple of pillows.

She kicked her sandals off. Midway through peeling her cotton top off, she heard a loud burring. She froze, her arms high in the air above her head, her face swaddled in fabric, waiting to hear the sound again.

Brrring...

Pulling her top back down, she padded out to the living area and tried to get a fix on where the noise was coming from. A flash of movement at the end of the kitchen’s raised counter caught her eye. All white, she hadn’t noticed the video intercom earlier.

Should she ignore it and hope her caller went away? No one knew she was there and the clean-shaven man staring up at the camera was a stranger. Almost as if sensing her disquiet, he held up what looked to be an identification badge. Police?

She picked up the handset. “Yes?”

“Chris Sykes, Detective Sergeant, and DC Lee Tait. Do you have a few minutes?”

She hesitated for a moment and then pushed the door release button. The DS’s black-and-white image disappeared from the screen. She hurried to the door, only opening it when she heard the lift brake.

“Hello, Jemma. Long time no see,” said the taller of the two men walking her way.

She scrutinised his face. Deep-set hazel eyes. Strong, Roman nose. Wide mobile mouth. Short black, wavy hair swept back from the forehead. Vague stirrings but nothing she could put her finger on.

He laughed. “You don’t remember me, do you?”

She gave her head a slow shake. “No. Should I?”

“Let’s see, the last time I saw you would’ve been about eighteen years ago, just before Tanya left Perth. You were probably only about nine or ten.”

“And of course neither of us has changed since then.” She still couldn’t place him.

He laughed again; a deep, throaty laugh, the corners of his eyes crinkling. “Our family lived down the street from you. Tanya and I were teenage sweethearts. I think I spent more time at your aunt’s place than I did at my own for a while there. I guess your sister didn’t talk to you much about us?” More question than statement.

“I’m sorry, I don’t remember.” She didn’t remember much at all about that time. Her mother’s slow, lingering death the year before from ovarian cancer had left such a black hole in her life, there had been no room for anything else. “Don’t forget Tanya is – was – eight years older than me. That’s a huge gap at that age. As much as she doted on me, I doubt she would have been inclined to share

her love life with her annoying little sister, do you?” She waved the two detectives into the apartment.

“Point taken,” Chris said, waiting for her to close the door. “Although we did catch up again at our school reunion last year. I thought you might’ve been there, too.”

“I couldn’t make it, unfortunately.” A white lie. She’d had every intention of going. Tanya, on the other hand, hadn’t wanted Jemma there, choosing to take her lewd fiancé’s word over her own sister’s. The beginning of the end.

“Anyway, how did you know I was here?”

“The property managers. I had asked them to keep me informed.”

“Why? The coroner’s already made his finding.”

“Courtesy really,” he said. “Thought it would help for you to know we’re here if you need us. Is there anything we can do? Get you?”

“Thanks, but I’m fine. Really.”

He shrugged. “Well, just give us a shout if there is anything.” He handed her a business card. “Any time of the day or night.”

She escorted Chris and his silent partner back to the door. “Tell me,” she said, “do you have any doubts Tanya killed herself?”

2

Jemma curled up on the couch and gazed out at the city lights. Cocooned in the dark she felt invisible, almost as if she didn't exist. Had Tanya felt the same way?

She closed her eyes. Memories of her vibrant, full-of-life sister flooded in. Her eyes snapped open, a gut-wrenching sob tearing at her throat. She had wanted to come, wanted to do this one last thing for Tanya, but maybe it had been too soon. Deep down, though, she knew it was more than that. She blamed herself for her sister's death. If only they hadn't argued, if only she hadn't told her about Sean, if only she had been there for her after his death, then she might still be alive.

But if-onyms wouldn't bring her sister back.

Jemma touched the wineglass in her hands to her lips and downed the last of the velvety Cabernet Merlot. Her sister had good taste in wine, if not men.

Sean Mullins: the love of Tanya's life and the root of the rift between the two sisters. Even now, Jemma couldn't see what Tanya had seen in the chauffeur-cum-personal-trainer besides his buff body and blond good looks. Yet, for months, all Tanya could talk about was Sean this and Sean that. If there was ever a woman besotted, she was it. And Jemma couldn't have been happier for her big sister. That is until she had the privilege of meeting her future brother-in-law in the flesh, so to speak.

She remembered it like it was yesterday. How could she forget?

When Tanya had offered to redeem some of her Frequent Flyer points for a return Perth-Melbourne ticket, Jemma had jumped at it. Not only would she be able to spend some quality time with her sister, but she would also finally get to know this wonderful man she had been hearing so much about.

It all started out civilly enough, even if Sean spent the first few minutes at the airport ogling his prospective sister-in-law's breasts. Though Tanya made no comment, her pursed lips said it all. Jemma resolved to change into a looser fitting, less revealing top as soon as she had a chance. More for her own sake than his. The last thing she needed was for her sister to accuse her of leading him on.

On the drive into the city, Sean did most of the talking, big noting himself at every opportunity. Both he and Tanya worked for a multi-millionaire property developer – it was how they met – but listening to Sean, Jemma thought she could almost be forgiven for thinking it was the other way around. Nothing wrong with ambition, she assured herself.

Then at dinner that evening, she felt his foot rubbing the inside of her calf under the table. She jerked back, her chair almost toppling. He returned her baleful stare with a smug smile and continued to fork food into his mouth. “Cramp,” she said in answer to Tanya's questioning look.

Back at the apartment, Tanya and Sean bade her goodnight. Her body still on Perth time, Jemma stayed up watching television in the living room. About an hour later, she heard someone moving around and looked up to see Sean parading stark naked across the room. She quickly averted her gaze, not wanting to see any more than necessary.

She held her breath, hoping he was sleepwalking or at the very least, it was an aberration. With any luck, he would come to his senses, go back to bed, and save them both from any further embarrassment.

She could still hear his voice. “What are you watching?” Low and husky. Then the weight of his body landing on the seat next to her. He smelled of sex. She gagged, leaping from the couch as she felt the heat of his damp skin brush against her arm.

“What the fuck do you think you’re playing at?” she hissed at him, her fists clenched so tightly her fingernails cut into her palms. “You’re engaged to my sister for God’s sake.”

“What?” His pale grey eyes widened in feigned innocence, his mouth spreading in a supercilious grin. “Just being hospitable.”

She backed away. “I’m warning you: stay away from me.”

In a flash he was standing, her right wrist in his steely grip. “Or what?” He yanked her off her feet, his mouth so close to hers, she could taste his winy breath. “Or what, little sister?”

“Or I’ll tell Tanya what you’re really like.”

With a snort, he released her. “What, and ruin your sister’s happiness?”

Why couldn’t she have just pretended it hadn’t happened? Why couldn’t she have disregarded the lecherous looks? Why couldn’t she have ignored the touching?

Because at the time, she thought she was saving her sister from a faithless marriage.

Another sob erupted from deep inside her. What was wrong with her that she couldn’t have foreseen that Tanya would take her fiancé’s word over her sister’s? It still hurt to think Tanya could have believed her own sister – her only real family – capable of fabricating such stories.

Jemma set the empty wineglass on the side table. *Whoever said time heals all wounds*, she thought as she slid down the leather couch, a pillow crushed to her chest, *was wrong. So, so wrong...*

She cried herself to sleep, the thought that she might never wake almost welcome. Except, unlike her sister, she hadn’t washed

down countless Valium tablets and God knows what else with a bottle of bourbon first.

Sometime later, she woke, groaning as she stretched her cramped muscles.

Ambient light from the city night outside cast a ghostly pall over the room. Unsticking herself from the leather, she pushed up on one elbow. She could make out furniture shapes in the room, but no detail.

About to get up, she stopped, her breath catching in her throat. Someone was at the door. Her face pressed against the pillow, she hunched down, shutting her eyes the instant light from the corridor spilled into the apartment. She heard the lock snib, followed by hesitant footsteps. Adrenaline coursed through her body, triggering her fight-or-flight response. But she had no means of escape and her only weapon was surprise.

Desperate to blend with the couch, she lay rock still and forced her breathing to slow. Somewhere behind her, she heard a sharp intake of breath. Her heartbeat ricocheted, her stomach knotting. She pressed her tongue hard against the roof of her mouth to stop herself crying out.

The footsteps retreated. Her eyes remained jammed shut long after she heard the click of the door. Eventually the message from her brain got through. Without moving her head, she peered under lowered lids into the gloom. Her ears strained for the slightest sound.

Nothing.

She waited.

Still nothing.

Stretching her arm up behind her, she groped on the side table for her mobile phone. In the process, she clipped the empty wineglass, sending it flying. She gasped as it bounced off her forehead and landed between her legs. She grabbed it by the stem

and sat upright, braver now she had a weapon of sorts in her hands.

She shuffled along the couch, her eyes trained on the door, her free hand feeling for her phone. Her fingers touched the square edges of a business card. She exhaled, a faint sigh escaping her lips.

With the card clamped between her teeth, she hooked her phone. She only hoped the light from the mobile phone's display would be enough to read the numbers on DS Sykes' business card.

Resting the wineglass against her thigh, she dialled Chris Sykes' mobile number. She winced at the tiny beep each time she touched the keypad, her gaze flicking back and forth between the door and her phone.

After what felt like an eternity, she heard a soft click, followed by a grunt, then nothing.

"Chris?" she asked in a strained whisper.

"Yeah." He sounded groggy, as if just woken from a deep sleep.

"Oh God, I didn't mean... I'm so sorry, but I didn't know who else to call."

"Jemma, is that you?" His voice sounded stronger, his concern evident.

"Yes. Someone broke in..." She took a breath. "Someone with a key."

"Into the apartment? When?"

"Tonight. A few minutes ago. I think they've gone now." Or so she hoped. The idea that the intruder might still be there, lurking in the dark, scared her more than she wanted to admit.

Clonk. "I'm on my way," he said, his voice suddenly hollow, echoey. A zipping sound and then what she assumed was him moving about. "But if they come back or you think you're in any danger at all dial triple-0 straight away. Got that?" She heard a jangle of keys. "Jemma, have you got that?"

"Yes." She bit her lip, the urgency in his voice not helping.

The call disconnected, leaving her alone in the dark, waiting. She tried to recall where the light switches were. It wasn't the dark she feared so much, as what it could be harbouring. Her heart rapping, she stood up, her phone clutched in her left hand, the wineglass relinquished. Each step took her deeper into shadows. Extending her right hand, she felt along the wall until she found a switch.

Bright white light flooded the room. She blinked, her eyes slow to adjust to the sudden glare. Her breathing steadied. As far as she could see, nothing looked out of place. She crept through the apartment, flicking on every light switch she came across. Only the master bedroom and en suite remained. She hesitated for a second, then grabbed for the door handle, slamming the door closed on the darkness within. Her breath escaped in a whoosh.

She stationed herself on the intercom's kitchen side, the raised counter acting as a barrier between her and the door. With swipe keys only giving access to programmed floors, cameras in the common areas, and regular security patrols, she had thought she couldn't be safer. Yet in the middle of the night, someone with a key had let themselves into her dead sister's apartment. Someone who hadn't expected anyone else to be there.

Although anticipating it, the buzz from the intercom made her jump. Sucking in air between her teeth, she checked the video monitor and pressed the door release button. It wasn't until she opened the door to let in a sleep-creased Detective Sykes that her heart rate began to drop again.

She pulled him in and locked the door.

Casually dressed in stonewash jeans and a XXXX grey marl T-shirt, he looked more like one of her mates than a police officer. But then he would. He was off-duty and she had just dragged him out of his bed.

“Sorry—”

He cut her off. "Don't be. You did the right thing. First, are you all right?"

She nodded. *Much better now that you're here*, she thought but didn't say.

"You're sure that whoever it was has gone?"

She glanced in the direction of the bedrooms. "Not unless there was more than one," she whispered.

"Okay, stay put while I check." He disappeared down the hall, leaving her standing at the door.

A couple of minutes later, he returned. "All clear. Now tell me what happened. Start from the beginning."

"I need to sit down," she said, heading for the living area.

He followed, taking up position in one of the two boxy armchairs as she scooped up the empty wineglass from the couch. She set it upright on the side table, ignoring his sidelong glance, and sat down.

Taking a deep breath, she proceeded to fill him in on everything she remembered: from waking disorientated, to the light coming through the door, to the realisation someone was in the apartment, to the intruder's hurried departure.

When she had finished, he uncrossed his legs and leaned forward. "Now don't take this the wrong way, but is it possible you dreamed it? Grief can do funny things to people."

She leapt to her feet. "You think I'm crazy?"

He ran a hand through his thick black hair and remained seated. "That's not what I meant. You're in a strange apartment in a strange city, having not long buried your sister. You said it yourself, you didn't know where you were when you first woke up. Is it just possible that the light and the footsteps were an extension of a nightmare you were having and that's what woke you?"

She cocked her head. For a fleeting moment, he had her doubting herself. “No,” she said, glaring down at him. “No, I did not imagine it.”

“I had to ask. Okay then,” he said, pulling his mobile phone from his pocket, “you need to report it.”

She grimaced. “I thought that’s what I was doing.” The idea of having to go through it all again, especially if they were to doubt her story, was too much.

“Sorry, Jemma,” he said, with a semi-apologetic smile. “I’m not actually here in any official capacity. That could be construed as a possible conflict of interest, my knowing you and your sister and all.”

“That’s that then,” she said, flopping back down onto the couch.

“What’s stopping you reporting it? It won’t take long and I can assure you my colleagues don’t bite. Not much, anyway.” He bared his teeth and snapped them together.

She gave a half-laugh-half-sigh. “You’re right, of course. It’s just that I’m so tired, I think I’m past the point of thinking straight.”

“Well, the boys in blue can’t investigate what they’re not told about.”

“But you can.”

“Can what?”

“Investigate. There are cameras all over the place in this building. Whoever it was couldn’t have got all the way up here without getting their photo snapped at least once. If we could see that, then at least you would know I wasn’t making it up.”

“I didn’t say that.”

“No matter,” she said with a quick shake of the head, “the security guy is going to be more inclined to talk to you – especially if you flash your badge – isn’t he?” She gave him what she hoped was a disarming smile.

He studied her, his hazel eyes narrowed. She shifted in her seat, uncomfortable under his intense gaze. Then his face relaxed, a hint of a smile tweaking the corners of his mouth.

“You have the same eyes.”

“Pardon?”

He leaned back in his chair, his hands behind his head. “You and Tanya; you have the same green eyes.”

She frowned at him. While Tanya had been blessed with their mother’s long legs and strawberry blonde locks, she had inherited more of the Italian genes from her father’s side. But what bearing did the colour of her eyes have on anything? “So? We are... were sisters.”

“Just an observation, that’s all.” He stood. “Okay, where’s the security office? I can’t promise anything, but I’ll give it a go.”

“I think I saw a magnet on the fridge with the phone number,” she said, already moving toward the kitchen.

As she reached around the side of the refrigerator, he opened its door. “There’s empty and then there’s empty. You have to eat, Jemma. You can’t live on air alone. Even if it is chilled,” he added.

She stepped between him and the open fridge, elbowing the door shut again. “Here,” she said, handing him the body corporate’s magnetised business card. “You worry about this. I’ll worry about me.” Grocery shopping was the least of her concerns.

One eyebrow arched, but he said nothing, taking the magnet from her fingers.

“Don’t mind me.” She forced a smile. “I’m not always this grumpy.”

His expression didn’t change. “No, you’re right: it isn’t any of my business. I’ll call this number and see what I can find out,” he said over his shoulder, walking away from her.

Her hand on her head, she stood like a dummy in the middle of the kitchen. If there was one thing she was good at, it was pushing people away. She was still standing there when Chris returned.

“Do you want the good news or the bad news?”

He didn’t give her a chance to reply.

“The good news,” he continued, “is I was able to sweet-talk the bloke into reviewing the security footage.”

She brightened.

“The bad news is, according to him, the only person who’s come or gone in the last hour is me.”