

**KILL ME
TWICE**
SIMON BOOKER

ZAFFRE

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Also by Simon Booker

Without Trace



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*For my mother, Edna Tromans,
and all single parents.*

PART ONE

One

Someone is watching.

She can feel his eyes.

But there's no one in sight.

No one down on the shoreline or in the woods up ahead.

Morgan and her daughter have had the cliffs to themselves since the rain died away and the sun began to shine. No sign of another soul since leaving the beach and climbing the steps to the windswept path looking over to France. Once you get past the golf course (the ugly clubhouse, the manicured green) things get rougher.

Wilder.

Lonelier.

The track dips into a wooded hollow then rises towards a kissing gate. Looming on the horizon is the memorial to those who kept the Channel open during two world wars. On a normal day the obelisk is a beacon spurring Morgan towards coffee at the White Cliffs Café. This is not a normal day.

Her instincts are right.

Someone is watching.

The savage blow to the back of her head comes out of a clear blue sky. One minute she's trying to talk twenty-year-old Lissa out



of getting breast implants, the next she's face down in a puddle, crying out in pain. Her first thought is for her daughter.

Is their assailant a mugger?

A rapist?

Worse?

Sprawled in the mud, she doubles up in agony as a heavy-booted kick connects with a rib. The pain is white hot, obliterating everything except Lissa's cries.

'No! Leave her alone!'

Another kick, this time in the stomach. Then, blinded by pain, face half submerged in a puddle, Morgan can hear the struggle as the attacker goes after Lissa. The thud as she is hurled to the ground. The sound of blows to her body. She tries to struggle to her feet, to protect her daughter.

NOBODY HARMS MY CHILD.

But she can't move.

Can't speak.

Can't see.

Seconds before she blacks out, she's aware of a metallic sound: the unmistakable *clink* of a Zippo lighter, the *rasp* of its flint. As she drifts towards unconsciousness, her nostrils detect a distinctive smell.

Human hair.

Her daughter's hair.

Burning.



Two

Clink-rasp.

The sound of the Zippo haunts Morgan's dreams. For forty-eight hours she refuses to leave Lissa's bedside, sleeping fitfully in a hospital chair, trying not to weep at the pain searing her ribs despite the powerful painkillers. She must stay strong. For her daughter's sake.

'Did you see his face?'

'No.'

Detective Inspector Neville Rook has kind eyes but Morgan fears he'll never trace the maniac who set fire to Lissa's hair. Neither woman saw their assailant. There were no witnesses.

Clink-rasp.

Morgan's ribs are bruised but not broken. She's been told she's lucky. Lissa has lost most of her hair but is deemed 'lucky' too. Shocked and bruised, but otherwise unharmed. At first, Lissa wept uncontrollably, which the doctor said was normal – a natural reaction to violent trauma – but she seems to have calmed down, settling for being moody instead. Just for a change.

Clink-rasp.

After two days of sympathetic police officers and brusque doctors, Morgan is allowed to drive her daughter home, to the

converted railway carriage on Dungeness beach. The sun is shining – an Indian summer day in mid-October – but a stiff wind is blowing in from the sea, singing in the power cables strung across telegraph poles. A couple of miles to the west, she can make out the shape of the prison. To the east lies the vast nuclear power station, dominating the landscape for miles around. And in between, the abandoned fishing boats, derelict shacks and piles of rusting scrap that make the desolate shoreline resemble the location of a post-apocalypse movie.

In the cluttered kitchen, setting the kettle to boil, she picks her moment to ask Lissa if she wants to move away from this bleak but beautiful place. Perched on a windswept spit of shingle half a mile from the nearest neighbour, the quirky, ramshackle house with its rickety lean-to is no one's idea of a safe haven. Clusters of wild flowers and sea kale soften the rugged shoreline and the wildlife is breathtaking – stoats, weasels, badgers, dragonflies – but wouldn't it be more *sensible* to live somewhere less isolated, somewhere ordinary?

'Fuck "sensible",' says Lissa. 'It was just a random attack.' Then, less confidently, 'Anyway, if we leave because we're scared, he wins. We can't let him win.'

Clink-rasp.

Morgan wonders if the reason for her daughter's determination to stay in the area has more to do with unrequited love than defiance. She hasn't been allowed to meet Pablo and knows little about him except that he's older (Lissa scorns men her own age) and lives in a camper van. He doesn't seem to have been around for at least two weeks. Lissa has taken to sleeping at home, surviving on Weetabix and Haribo and checking her iPhone every few



minutes – a sure sign of a break-up. Any hope of cosy mother-daughter chats ('what is it with *men*?') was dashed long ago. Both are lousy pickers.

No offence, Mum, but your exes? Including Dad? I'd be, like, yeucch! Swipe left.

It's true – Morgan's love life is a joke, a fact underlined by last year's fling with a fellow hack now known as 'The Shit'. When she discovered that he was married she deleted his number, burned the tacky lingerie he'd given her and ignored his messages. He retaliated by awarding her book a one-star review on Amazon.

Despite his petty gesture, *Trial and Error: a History of Miscarriages of Justice* has paid off her overdraft. Its surprise bestseller status has rescued Morgan's career from the doldrums, allowing her to reinvent herself as an expert in the controversial field of wrongful convictions. The *Guardian* dubbed her 'full of fury and passion, a one-woman Innocence Project'. Editors now respond to her impassioned emails concerning verdicts she believes require urgent re-examination. So far, however, no newspaper will hire her to champion the hapless souls who fall foul of the British criminal justice system.

Sorry, Morgan. All down to money.

She doesn't take it personally. She understands the reality of what remains of the newspaper industry: dwindling circulation; staff cuts; slashed budgets. Why fund a fishing expedition when you can fill your pages with TV tittle-tattle for free? Adapt or die. Ask the *Star* or the *Sun*.

Pro Bono seems different. The webzine start-up has offered to publish the next investigation Morgan undertakes which, if today goes according to plan, may be fast approaching.



As well as rejuvenating her career, *Trial and Error* has prompted a flood of letters from prisoners protesting their innocence. Morgan's kitchen is littered with Jiffy bags bulging with mail forwarded by her publisher. She reads every letter. A few have the ring of truth but many more reek of lies and desperation. Nine times out of ten she has no choice but to reply 'there's nothing I can do', or, at best, forward the letter to *bona fide* innocence projects. Their volunteers – idealistic law students – are overzealous and under-resourced, but once in the bluest of moons there's a chance they can offer greater hope than Morgan's solo effort.

Amongst the letters, one protestation of innocence has captured her interest.

Anjelica Fry.

Twenty-seven years old, a care home cook serving a lengthy sentence in HMP Dungeness for the murder of her ex-boyfriend, the father of her baby. A line from one of her letters has stayed with Morgan.

Please help me. This is the one place you can die of hope.

The prison is on Morgan's doorstep. More importantly, she feels an affinity with a fellow single mother. And there is something about the way Anjelica was demonised by the tabloids.

Cold-blooded killer.

Arsonist Anjelica.

Mum murdered ex-lover while baby slept.

Morgan remembers the story well: a late-night arson attack on a flat in Dalston, east London. Anjelica is said to have driven across the city in the small hours to torch the home of her ex-boyfriend, Karl Savage. After their bitter break-up, he'd threatened to abduct their three-month-old son and take him abroad.

Morgan recalls her own doubts about the guilty verdict. On the night in question the baby was running a temperature. Anjelica had taken him to the doctor. She was told to come back the following day if he was still unwell. To torch Karl's flat at 3 a.m. she would have had to leave the sickly infant alone for hours or take him with her, driving across London without being caught on CCTV. Nothing at the trial or in the press raised any doubt about Anjelica's devotion to her son.

Something wasn't right.

Intuition has its place, but before Morgan will commit time and energy she needs solid evidence that the system has messed up. The tone of Anjelica's letter – desperate, impassioned – has prompted her to take a crucial first step. A prison visit is set for lunchtime.

Now, her ribs are aching. She downs two more painkillers then picks up her keys.

'Will you be OK on your own? Couple of hours?'

Slumped on the sofa, Lissa nods, eyes not straying from her phone.

'Yep.'

'Heard from Pablo?'

'Nope.'

'Are you staying home all day?'

A roll of the eyes.

'No. Going to Piccadilly to show off my new hairstyle.'

Morgan takes the bolshy attitude in her stride. Why wouldn't Lissa be stropic? She was attacked in broad daylight. If she hadn't doused herself in a puddle her burns would have been much worse. As it is, her hair is mostly gone, but at least her scalp and face are virtually unscathed.

Her psyche is another story.

Violence changes people.

And she's already been through more than any twenty-year-old should endure, thanks to a misguided fling with another Shit.

The worry keeps Morgan awake. For some time, her daughter has shown signs of being borderline agoraphobic: anxious about leaving the house, except to see Pablo; wary of strangers; panic attacks. The cliff-top assault has done nothing to help her state of mind.

'Pizza tonight?'

Lissa shrugs.

'Whatever.'

Morgan heads for the door. Outside, on the deserted beach, the wind has died down and the sun is warm. She winces in pain, clutching her ribs as she eases herself into the Mini. Lissa hurries out of the house, holding her mother's old leather jacket.

'You forgot this.'

Morgan frowns.

'It's too warm for a jacket.'

Lissa looks away.

'Might rain. Take it, just in case.'

Frown deepening, Morgan places the jacket on the passenger seat then drives off.

The sky is blue.

Not a cloud in sight, no hint of rain.

Why is her daughter so insistent?

Three

The question soon assumes fresh urgency. The drive to HMP Dungeness takes four minutes. Morgan could walk it in fifteen, but not today. Not with aches and bruises that make her feel twice her age. Parking the Mini, she dons the leather jacket, despite the heat. Not long ago the car was broken into and her belongings were stolen. Once is enough.

Entering the prison building, she shows her visitor's order and leaves her phone at the gate, exchanging small talk with the officer designated to escort her along the brightly lit corridors and through a series of locked gates. They know her here. Not long ago she was a regular, running the men's reading group on C-Wing.

Today she's heading for A-Wing. The Mother and Baby Unit, aka MBU.

One of a handful of unisex prisons in the UK, HMP Dungeness has acquired a fearsome reputation thanks to its new governor, Ian Carne. Inevitably nicknamed 'Genghis', he was parachuted in to replace the previous incumbent whose early retirement 'for personal reasons' took everyone by surprise. 'Genghis's' regime is tough for prisoners and staff alike. Spot checks for drugs and phones. Zero tolerance for violence. No second chances.



At the MBU gate Morgan resists the temptation to stroke the sniffer dog, a black Labrador. These are working dogs, not pets. She's instructed to sit on the Body Orifice Scanner, then receives a brisk rubdown from an unsmiling female officer who could use a mint.

'Open your mouth.'

Morgan does as instructed. The woman moves closer, peering under her tongue.

'Wait here.'

The officer leaves. Morgan sits on a bucket chair, scanning the rules and regulations.

Aiding and abetting an escape will lead to imprisonment.

No photography. No drugs. No bullying.

Only yesterday she read about new, metal-free plastic mobiles in the shape of tubes of lipstick, designed to make them easy to hide inside a prisoner's body. Or a visitor's. Little wonder there's a clampdown.

After a ten-minute wait another officer arrives, keys jangling on his belt. Morgan has met him before. Knocking sixty – maybe older – probably close to retirement. Beefy, bald, stubbly chin. His name is Trevor Jukes. He gives Morgan a lopsided smile.

'Morning, Miss. I need you to put your jacket in a locker.'

Morgan raises an eyebrow.

'Because?'

'Can't take anything onto the wing, not even coats.'

'But I've been searched.'

His smile thins.

'Problem, Miss?'



Morgan remembers Lissa pressing her to wear the jacket. She feels a frisson of anxiety then dismisses it straight away. She has passed the checks. The sniffer dog showed no interest. Slipping off the jacket, she puts her hands in its pockets and feels around. Empty.

‘No, no problem.’

Jukes places the jacket in a locker. He hands her a numbered plastic tag.

‘I’ll take you to Miss Fry.’

He unlocks the gate. Whistling the theme from *The Archers*, he leads her through an AstroTurf exercise yard bordered by fencing topped with razor wire. Two female prisoners in their twenties are approaching from the other direction. One has a port wine stain on her right cheek, the other has pink hair.

‘Where are you ladies off to?’

‘See the doctor, Sir.’

Sir. Miss. Mister. Morgan finds the formality comical, but it’s designed to foster respect between staff and inmates and seems to have the desired effect. Except when things kick off. Which can happen at any time.

Unlocking the gate to A-Wing, Jukes ushers her inside. The hubbub is raucous but not menacing, the way it can be on a men’s wing. Dozens of women queue for microwaved baked potatoes and a thin brown sludge that might be chilli. Almost all wear tracksuits and trainers. A few glance at Morgan, mildly curious, but most are focused on their lunch.

She signs in at the wing office then follows her squeaky-shoed escort along a corridor and through another set of locked gates, the babble of canteen conversation receding into the distance.



'I'm reading your book,' says Jukes over his shoulder.

Surprised, Morgan says nothing, waiting for more.

'I borrowed it from Anjelica Fry. Thought I'd see what all the fuss is about.'

'I'd be interested to know what you think.'

'No, you wouldn't.'

'Excuse me?'

'I have to work with these people, Miss. They're innocent, apparently – all hundred-and-twenty-two of them. Trust me, you don't want to know what I think. Especially of Anjelica Fry.'

Morgan is nonplussed. As a rule, prison officers stay poker-faced in front of civilians, remaining non-committal about inmates in their care. It's rare for an old hand like Jukes to drop his guard. She's tempted to argue, to cite cases in her book.

Are you suggesting there's no such thing as a miscarriage of justice? Hillsborough? Timothy Evans? Derek Bentley? The Birmingham Six? The Guildford Four? And don't get me started on all those mothers wrongly imprisoned for killing their babies because some egomaniacal 'expert witness' got it wrong. Can you imagine a worse agony?

These thoughts flit through Morgan's mind, but that's where they'll stay. It's never smart to alienate a prison officer, not if you're considering resuming your status as a regular visitor.

Jukes leads her up a flight of stairs then stops at a door and punches in a four-digit code. Entering the MBU, Morgan is immediately aware of a change in atmosphere: calmer, more like a nursery than a prison, primary colours on the walls. Occupying the entire landing, the unit is open plan – a dozen cubicles separated by low partition walls. Each woman has a





bed, a locker and a cot. The peace is disturbed by a couple of crying babies at the far end of the landing, but most are sleeping or occupied by their mothers. A couple of women are breastfeeding, others tend to their babies, chat to each other or nap. One stands at the communal changing table, struggling to put a nappy on a newborn.

Morgan spots Anjelica Fry straight away. Apart from two officers, hers is the only black face on the wing. Newspaper photos showed a plump woman, but the transformation is shocking. Gaunt. Dark circles under puffy eyes. Thin to the point of emaciation. The convicted murderer is twenty-seven, but could be mistaken for forty, maybe older.

She's sitting on the floor of a playpen staring dully at a baby boy who prods at a stack of plastic bricks. Registering her visitor's arrival, the woman blinks slowly then gives a frown, as if trying to work out the answer to a puzzle. Morgan makes a quick assumption: Anjelica is on powerful medication, her brain addled by a cocktail of chemicals designed to dull her emotional pain and, above all, keep her quiet.

Morgan smiles, holding up a wait-a-moment finger as she shows her visitor's order to the prison officer, a borderline-obese woman in her thirties. She can see Anjelica getting to her feet, lifting her baby from the playpen and handing him to one of the other mothers.

Looking around for Trevor Jukes, Morgan sees him muttering in the ear of another screw. She overhears the words 'Care Bear' and stifles a flicker of irritation. Prison visitors, art therapists, social workers – all are damned as 'bleeding-heart liberals' or 'busybodies'. That people think this way makes





Morgan seethe. Is it just a British thing? Do other countries and cultures use 'do-gooder' as a term of abuse?

She's relieved when Jukes leaves without saying goodbye.

'Miss Fry – visitor.'

The overweight officer beckons to Anjelica who plants a half-hearted kiss on her baby's forehead then leaves him with her fellow prisoner and shuffles towards the wing office. Everything about the woman is in slow motion – the way she walks, blinks, swings her arms. She has bruises on her forearm, cuts to her cheek and her forehead is bandaged. If asked, she will say she 'fell in the shower'.

Visits usually take place in the visitors' centre, but thanks to an initiative by 'Genghis' Carne, mothers have dispensation to receive people on MBU itself, so they can show their babies to family and friends without disrupting other visits. A baby can stay till he or she reaches the age of eighteen months. After that, 'the system' takes over. Fostering. Adoption. 'Care'.

The officer nods the two women into a side room. A circle of chairs. Posters offer tired homilies.

Change your thoughts, change your world.

Forgiveness means giving up all hope of a better past.

'Your baby's gorgeous,' says Morgan.

As icebreakers go it's far from subtle, but has the virtue of being true. Something approaching a smile crosses Anjelica's face.

'Yeah.'

Her voice is barely audible, a croak. She fingers a gold crucifix around her neck.

'What's his name?'

'Marlon.'

'As in Brando?'





Anjelica shakes her head.

‘It was Karl’s dad’s name.’ She frowns. Blinks. A thought fights its way through the cocktail of drugs. ‘I keep thinking they’re going to take him away, put him in care.’

She refocuses her gaze, as though seeing her visitor for the first time. Her eyes flicker towards the guard stationed outside the door then back to Morgan.

‘I’m not a strong person. I can’t stay in here. Please?’

Morgan keeps her voice steady. Firm but gentle.

‘I need to be honest from the start. I can’t promise anything. Are we clear?’

A nod.

‘So, tell me your story.’

Anjelica blows her nose. She clears her throat then tucks the tissue into her sleeve, like a little girl.

‘Where do I begin?’

Anjelica Fry met Karl Savage in a Starbucks near the care home where she cooked two meals a day for thirty-five elderly residents. He spilt her coffee, paid for a replacement and made her laugh so much she thought she was going to wet her knickers. A week later he charmed her into bed – her first white boyfriend, her first big love. She got pregnant almost immediately, even though they were scrupulous about protection.

One in a billion, Karl called it, but with hindsight she wonders if he might have pricked holes in the condoms.

‘He made a joke about it once,’ says Anjelica. ‘Looking back, I think he was being serious. He was desperate for kids. “I want hundreds of mini-mes”, he said. “Karl Savage is prime daddy material”’



Morgan raises an eyebrow.

'Did he often talk about himself in the third person?'

'Sometimes. Why?'

'Never mind. Go on.'

As the pregnancy progressed, Karl persuaded Anjelica to move in to his Dalston flat, above a Vietnamese restaurant. Only then did the 'charmer' slowly reveal his true nature: a control freak, obsessively jealous, incapable of passing up any chance to bed other women, sometimes two in a day. He told Anjelica he'd worked for years as an electrician but now dealt in second-hand cars. A week after Marlon was born she discovered the truth: her baby's father was a drug dealer. Karl specialised in what he called the 'ack drugs' – crack and smack – and was full of grandiose ideas. Had she heard of Pablo Escobar? Worth thirty billion dollars? Karl was going to be bigger than Escobar.

Anjelica pointed out that the drug lord had died in a hail of bullets, but he'd shrugged, retorting that 25,000 people had turned out for Escobar's funeral, and you didn't get a Netflix show about your life if you were a nobody.

He'd flashed the tattoo on the soft, white flesh inside his forearm.

Rather die on my feet than live on my knees.

She spent months plotting her escape, getting herself fixed up with a housing association flat back in her old manor, Croydon, to be near her widowed father, but he'd died of lung cancer before she could make the move. The day after the funeral, while Karl was 'at work', Anjelica took Marlon to the park. She never came back.



Cue Karl's charm offensive. Tearful apologies. Doggerel copied from greetings cards and written in red biro. Flowers stolen from the local cemetery. When these tactics failed, the harassment began. Stalking. Yelling in the street. Obsessive messaging. Nearly three hundred texts in one insane forty-eight-hour period. Standing outside her flat, staring up at her bedroom window, finger pressing on the buzzer.

Buzz. Buzz. Buzz. BUZZZZZZZZ.

Anjelica tried to reason with the man she'd loved. She borrowed books from the library and, after reading widely, told her ex that he had abandonment issues, a legacy of having lost his father at a young age and being maltreated by his mother. She also told him that he had a borderline personality disorder and exhibited many of the tendencies associated with being a sociopath. He called her a bitch. And worse. But she didn't sever all ties.

'Why not?' says Morgan.

A shrug.

'He could be sweet. And he was good looking, sexy, exciting.'

'Exciting in what way?'

Anjelica screws up her eyes, thinking hard.

'He picked me up one night in a taxi. Not a minicab, a proper black taxi. I asked where we were going. He wouldn't say. Told the driver to go to the West End and keep driving around Knightsbridge, Park Lane, all these posh places. Then he gave him a hundred quid cash so we could do it in the back of the cab, outside Buckingham Palace.'

'Classy guy.'

The sarcasm is lost on Anjelica.

'Yeah.' A slow smile plays on her lips. 'But crazy.'



‘What kind of crazy?’

Anjelica stretches her arms above her head.

‘Sometimes good crazy, like the taxi thing. But bad crazy too. Like the night with the ambulance.’

‘Ambulance?’

The woman cracks her knuckles then puts her hands in her pockets.

‘We were driving home. He’d borrowed a flash car – a red Porsche – and we got stuck in rush-hour traffic. Total gridlock. And this ambulance was trying to get through – siren blaring, lights flashing. All the cars were desperately trying to get out of the way, clearing the road, but Karl didn’t move a muscle. Just kept looking in his rear-view mirror, with the ambulance stuck behind us, trying to get past, honking and flashing its lights. And he was laughing, happy as Larry, blocking the road.’

Morgan’s eyes widen.

‘Deliberately?’

The woman nods.

‘I said, “Someone’s in that ambulance. They need to get to hospital.” He told me to shut the eff up.’

‘So what happened?’

‘The other cars managed to manoeuvre out of the way, so the ambulance could get by. Then the gridlock cleared and he drove me home. I told him he had a sick soul. He told me not to make a fuss. Then he came up with one of his sayings: “Keep all the rules, miss all the fun.”’ The woman sniffs. ‘He had all these stupid *sayings*.’

‘Like?’



Anjelica thinks for a moment.

‘Like, “Whatever you do in life, you need to go up like a rocket, even if you come down like a stick.”’

‘That’s the first thing he’s said that makes sense,’ says Morgan.

‘That was Karl. One minute he was smart and funny and kind, the next he was like Jekyll and Hyde. After I had the baby, it was all flowers and lovey-dovey stuff at first. But then we had a mega row and he told me I was a terrible mother. Threatened to snatch Marlon and take him out of the country.’

‘Was he being serious?’

‘Absolutely.’ She takes a breath. ‘So that’s why I did what I had to do.’

‘Which was?’

‘I told the police he sold drugs.’

Anjelica’s voice has taken on a steely edge. Morgan holds her breath. She’s forgotten the ache in her ribs.

‘He had another saying: “What Karl Savage wants, Karl Savage gets”,’ says Anjelica, shifting in her chair. ‘It was true. He wanted me, he got me. He wanted a baby, he got a baby. He wanted other women, he got them. So if he wanted his son . . .’ She tails off, tugging the tissue from her sleeve and blowing her nose again. ‘Then the fire happened.’

Morgan remembers the newspaper accounts. Karl’s body was so badly burned that he was identifiable only through dental records.

‘Where were you the night he died?’

She’s read the accounts in the papers but wants to hear Anjelica’s version. To look into her eyes. Watch her body language. Searching for a tell.





‘At home. Marlon was sick. His temperature was so high I was terrified. The doctor said it probably wasn’t serious, just a fever, but I stayed up all night. I phoned NHS Direct around 2 a.m. They said to take him to A & E if he got worse, otherwise leave it till the surgery opened in the morning.’

‘And?’

‘I stayed awake all night, taking his temperature every hour and praying like I never prayed before. I didn’t leave the flat. I swear on the Bible.’

Glancing at the crucifix dangling from the woman’s neck, Morgan feels a pang of guilt. Assuming Anjelica is telling the truth, she succeeded where Morgan failed. The most important job of all. Keeping her child from harm.

Pushing the thought away, Morgan recalls many sleepless nights with Lissa, often a sickly baby. Obsessively checking her temperature. No one to turn to. She may not have been the world’s best mother but she could never have left her baby alone for hours. Could Anjelica Fry?

‘Tell me about the petrol can. The one the police found in your car.’

‘Dad’s old car.’ Anjelica is twisting her tissue in her fingers. ‘He left it to me when he died. I was going to sell it, but—’

‘Forget the car. Tell me about the petrol can.’

Anjelica has told the story many times. To police. To lawyers. To the jury. Maybe that’s why it sounds rehearsed.

‘I had a bad experience when I was eighteen, just after I passed my driving test. I borrowed Dad’s car one night. Ran out of petrol in the middle of nowhere. This guy offered me a



lift in his van. Made me laugh for a couple of miles then pulled into a lay-by and raped me.' She takes a deep breath and falls silent for a moment. When she speaks again her voice is barely audible. 'After I inherited the car I kept petrol in the boot so I'd never run out again.'

Morgan leans forward.

'The police said the can was empty. The prosecution said it contained traces of the brand of petrol used by the arsonist.'

Angelica nods, rolling her eyes.

'The whole additives thing, yeah.'

The whole additives thing is what did for Angelica, along with the Spanish matches found in her flat. Fire investigators identified distinctive molecules from additives used by BP. The police retrieved CCTV of Angelica filling the can on a BP forecourt. So far, so unexceptional: hundreds of BP stations, millions of gallons of fuel. But the investigators also managed to identify diatoms from matches in Anjelica's kitchen – a Spanish brand with which she shared her name. She admitted bringing the 'Anjelica' matches home from a holiday in Lanzarote – just a quirky souvenir, but without it she might be at home now, or taking Marlon to the park.

Her solicitor said the evidence against her was purely circumstantial. No jury would convict.

But here she is. And here she'll stay, unless someone champions her cause.

'They said I'd have done anything to stop Karl taking my baby, which was true.' Angelica checks herself, swallowing. 'But not that. Not setting fire to his flat . . .' She swallows again, eyes brimming with tears.

Morgan lets Anjelica sob. She scans the woman's bruises, the cuts on her cheek. She doesn't need to ask how they got there. The woman is unpopular. Weeks of hostile press coverage cemented her reputation as a callous killer. A heartless mother.

Mum murdered lover while sick baby cried.

Devil woman.

'Time's up.'

The overweight prison officer is in the doorway, hands on her hips.

Morgan checks her watch.

'Still got twenty minutes.'

'My shift's over. There's no one to supervise.'

Anjelica looks panic-stricken.

'We don't need anyone to supervise.'

The officer rolls her eyes.

'Two minutes – make 'em count.'

She steps outside. Anjelica starts to babble, running out of time.

'The good Lord knows I'm telling the truth but he's testing me every day. I need you to believe me. There's no CCTV of me driving across London, the car doesn't show up on the number plate recognition thing – the ANPR . . .'

She knows all the jargon. But still Morgan isn't convinced.

You could have taken a friend's car. Or a night bus. Or a minicab.

'I need to review everything,' she says. Her ribs are aching now.

Anjelica fixes her with a glare.

'Easy to write a book, make money,' she says. 'Harder to help people.'



Morgan forces half a smile. The woman is short on charm, but has a point.

‘I’ll give you an answer as soon as I can.’

She gets to her feet. Anjelica follows suit, fear in her eyes, panic in her voice.

‘I can’t lose my baby. I can’t be in here. Not for something I didn’t do.’ She pauses, her voice falling to a whisper. ‘God forgive me for saying this, but if you don’t help me, I’ll kill myself.’

The threat makes Morgan bristle with anger. The words harden her heart.

‘You know I’ll have to report what you just said.’

A steely stare.

‘Just being honest.’

The officer is back, tapping her watch, lips pursed.

‘I’ll be in touch,’ Morgan says. But Anjelica isn’t finished.

‘I read your book. It says you have a daughter.’

‘Yes.’

The woman stares Morgan in the eye.

‘Think about me tonight, when you’re trying to get to sleep. Picture me here. Imagine I’m your daughter.’

‘I’ll do what I can. I promise.’

Morgan follows the officer onto the landing. She turns. Anjelica is watching, twisting the tissue in her hands, a picture of anguish. Behind her head is a poster.

Today is the first day of the rest of your life.

On the landing, Morgan relays Anjelica’s threat to the officer. The woman gives a weary sigh then produces a form. Morgan



completes it, recording Anjelica's desperate attempt at emotional blackmail. Across the landing, the two prisoners are returning with Jukes. Morgan hears Port Wine Stain whisper to her fellow inmate, the hefty woman with pink hair.

'I'll hold the bitch down, you kick her tits.'

Little doubt who she's talking about. Morgan scans Jukes's face but he remains impassive.

'Did you hear that?'

'Hear what, Miss?'

Morgan considers her options. She could make a fuss, but knows it would be counter-productive, especially if she needs to see Anjelica again. She has yet to make a decision, but the fact she didn't warm to the woman is irrelevant. She's not looking for friends, she's looking for justice. And maybe an investigation for *Pro Bono* with a decent pay cheque attached. But she needs to be sure of her ground.

Trevor Jukes escorts her back to the exit, his jaunty whistling echoing along the corridors. In reception, he retrieves her leather jacket from the locker. Feeling in its pockets, she gives nothing away, but her heart is galloping, her brain racing.

Reaching the safety of her car, she scrutinises the jacket carefully, turning it over in her hands.

The lining has been slit open.

Then sewn up again.