

Maggie glanced in the rearview mirror. The biker was still there. About a hundred metres behind, consistently. She slowed to a crawl, he slowed to a crawl. She sped up, he matched her.

She looked to one side, then the other. Past barbed wire fences, stooped trees jutted from overgrown grass and scrub. Both sides. She made note of the trees with the lowest branches before she slowed again. In the rearview the biker did the same. She stopped. So did he.

She ran through her options. They were few and far between. She made a point of not looking in the back seat, where her gun waited below a blanket. Instead, she reached under her seat and found the rock she kept there. Triangular, it fit snugly in her palm, peaking sharply upwards. She opened the door and stepped out, slipping the rock into her back pocket as she did. The air outside was warm. The sun was high. The biker waited.

She walked towards him. He wasn't wearing a helmet. His hair was long and lank, his eyes covered by reflective sunglasses. He reached into his jacket as he got off his bike.

She resisted the urge to grab the rock. She stopped, about fifty metres from him.

He didn't bother disguising the pistol. He held it at his side as he walked towards her. His face was pockmarked and thin. He was grinning. His teeth were yellow. He stopped about a metre away from her.

Maggie said nothing.

'Afternoon,' he said.

'You're following me.'

'Am I?' He looked around. 'Lot to see on these back roads. Just admiring the views.'

'At the exact same speed as me.'

He watched her for a moment. 'You were in Koolgarrie last night.'

'I was.'

'In a little bar.'

'Yeah.'

'Meet anyone interesting?'

'Define interesting.'

The smile twitched. 'Interesting enough that you felt the need to stick a knife in their heart then drop them in a ditch.'

'I wouldn't call that kind of person interesting,' Maggie said. 'I'd call them bad.'

'And while you were calling them that, did you happen to notice the cut they were wearing?'

Maggie looked at his jacket. 'Similar to yours, I guess?'

'Correct,' he said. 'Now, that ought to have warned you that you were dealing with a bloke who had mates.'

He gestured as he spoke. The gun moved as he did. Maggie didn't watch it.

'I was dealing with a man threatening the bartender for money and touching up every girl in the joint,' she said.

'So you did meet him.'

'I don't remember denying that.'

'Don't play games.' His voice hardened. 'Jeff was a mate. When he didn't report back, questions were asked. And answered by the people you so heroically stepped in to help.'

'I'll bet the gun had nothing to do with them opening up.'

The man nodded past her. 'We got a mate down at the station. Asked him to check police records. That car ain't yours. It was reported stolen weeks ago.'

'It's a black jeep,' Maggie said. 'I doubt it's rare.'

'Who the fuck are you?'

'Does it matter?'

'Yeah it fucking matters.' His gesturing had increasing. 'It matters because you fucked with the Black Saints and we like to know just who fucked with us before we-'

The gun was pointed fully away from her as she brought the rock down hard on his forehead. There was a crack. The biker staggered back. He gaped at her. A trickle of blood ran down behind his glasses.

She hit him again. He dropped the gun. She struck again and again until his head was visibly dented and his face was red and finally he fell hard and was still.

Maggie took a deep breath. She looked down at her hand, drenched in blood. She looked up past the bike. No sign of any other cars. Things might not stay that way, even on a forgotten back road like this.

She hurried back to her car. She found a plastic bag in the back seat and wrapped the rock. She washed her hand with a bottle of water, making sure to do it over the dirt at the side of the road, so the blood was soaked up with the water. She got back in the car, reversed, and turned it around so that it faced the fence. Her eyes found one of the trees she'd noticed before, with a low branch pointed towards her.

She accelerated.

With a shriek of scratched metal that made her flinch, the car tore through the fence, bumping and jerking hard as it did. She stopped just past the point where the barbed wire had broken, then got out and hurried back to the road.

The biker was heavy. It took three minutes of grunting and sweating to get him to the car. She forced him into the front seat. She didn't put on the seatbelt. She doubted he would. She

eyed the damage to his forehead. It was pretty obvious it had been done by a rock. There wasn't a lot she could do about that. Hopefully nobody cared enough to check.

She pocketed his pistol on the way back to the bike. Sure enough, she found a helmet in the back compartment. He really should have worn it. She carried it back to the car. She took a moment to check the positioning before starting the ignition. She checked again. Then, taking care to step back, she shoved the heavy helmet down hard on the accelerator.

The car rolled, then it rolled faster and faster and then it slammed hard into the tree. The sound of the crash and shattering glass was deafening even from a distance. Pungent black smoke poured into the air, but there was no explosion. Shame.

Upon closer inspection, squinting through the smoke, she had to be pretty happy with the way it had gone. The branch had smashed straight through the windscreen, raking his face as it went. The impact and force of collision appeared to have broken his neck too. Good. Even with a thorough investigation it would take time to work out how he'd died.

She found the bourbon in the boot, luckily unharmed. She poured some in his mouth then wrapped his gloved fingers around it. She placed his gun on the cracked dashboard. Let the cops make of that what they will. An autopsy would reveal he wasn't drunk, but whether anyone wanted to pay for the autopsy of a violent biker was another matter.

Maggie retrieved the helmet and her backpack. She put her gun and the wrapped rock in her bag before wiping down what she could reach with an old cloth. Not perfect, but she wasn't expecting too much scrutiny. And if it happened, well, she'd escaped worse. She checked it all over one more time and grabbed the bottle of water before walking back to the road. She scuffed up the dirt with her boot where she had dragged him, doing her best to obscure the tracks. She poured water over the spot where the biker had died until there was no more visible blood.

The bike was too big for her, but she didn't mind. She'd always wanted a motorbike. She started the engine. It felt powerful and alive.

Before she rode away, she pulled on the helmet. Bad things happened to people who didn't wear them.