

## Prologue

‘You expect me to believe none of this is your fault, Ms Grey?’ said Senior Sergeant Miller. The words were accompanied by a look, not so much of disbelief, but suspicion.

‘Precisely,’ Ashley responded. She tried to give her best nonchalant look. This type of incident did not warrant the sergeant’s meticulous attention, Ashley thought. I don’t need to be sitting handcuffed to the sergeant’s chair. It’s not like I committed a crime.

‘Ms Grey, I am a man of many years’ experience. I have had the misfortune of dealing with the widest spectrum of criminal and delinquent behaviour. I have jailed homicidal maniacs, prosecuted deviant criminals and investigated monstrous crimes. I have heard every excuse under the sun.’ He paused.

Senior Sergeant Miller gave her a look conveying this was her last opportunity.

‘You contend you have been falsely charged with assault, harassment and resisting arrest?’

Ashley nodded.

‘According to you, the harassment charge was a – misunderstanding?’ He emphasised the word.

Ashley nodded again, accompanied with a smile. She hoped it gave an ‘oh this kind of thing happens all the time’ impression.

‘I have not even got to falsely imprisoning a senior member of our legal system to prevent, in your words, “a serious miscarriage of justice”. You expect me to believe all of this Ms Grey?’

Well when you put it like that, Ashley thought. Words caught in her throat and for the first time in her career she was speechless. Ashley inhaled deeply. She wasn’t going to win this one; she didn’t have options. Under normal circumstances Sophie would be her first point of call. Sophie wouldn’t question her. Rather, she would effect her rescue with a great deal of class and fluidity, and probably take her for a much needed drink afterwards to compensate for the humiliation of being arrested and the subsequent shock of actually being charged. Ashley sighed. Sophie was interstate on business and even if she left immediately she wouldn’t arrive for quite some time.

Ashley knew she couldn't call her boss. He would question her sanity and her job would definitely be on the line, if it wasn't already.

She couldn't call her parents. Their severe lack of legal knowledge would result in a drama far bigger than the one she had created herself. She could just imagine her mother's arrival would be an entry itself. Ashley wasn't sure the police would bail her out to her mother - champagne in one hand, a Prada handbag worth more than most people's monthly salary in the other and complaining she had to drive herself because Boris, the family's driver, was on vacation. Ashley's father would barge in complaining that he preferred not to be seen outside a police station, all the while checking his hair in any mirror he passed. Calling her parents would be ludicrous.

Ashley was certain she would not qualify for a legal aid solicitor. She could pluck a random law firm from an internet search but there was no reason for the person appointed to her case to be sympathetic to her circumstances.

But Ashley's subconscious was way ahead. She thought of him. She recalled the last time she'd seen him, their argument, the disappointment in his eyes. He hadn't spoken to her since, and she had wondered if he would forgive her. Despite this, she knew he would assist her in her time of need. All she had to do was make the call and say the words. Whatever the situation, she knew he would have her back, like he had proved so many times in the past. She took a deep breath and uttered the words she had been reluctant to say.

'I think I would like my lawyer now.'