

CHAPTER 25

THE VERDICT

EVICTED FROM TOMORROW

The paper was blinding white. It shone with a surgical glare against the weathered grain of my own front door, a reflection not of light but of finality.

It was not just paper. It was a ruling delivered without trial.

A life sentence of exile from my own future.

The words EVICTION NOTICE. MORTGAGE IN POSSESSION did not sit on the page.

They screamed.

My home was no longer mine.

My path to Australian residency, now closed.

My business seemed to be sliding toward a hollow, echoing end.

A bottomless pit opened within my gut. A visceral chasm so sudden and deep the floor of the world seemed to give way.

My key fumbled in the lock; my hands numb and clumsy. The familiar metallic click sounded like the snap of a bone.

I pushed the door open.

A chill spread through my veins, entirely divorced from the fierce Australian sun at my back.

The silence inside was a physical force. The silence of a scream frozen in time.

I walked to the couch, sat down, and surrendered. I let the darkness swallow me whole.

This is what rock bottom feels like. It is a physiological event.

My breathing turned shallow. Something in my lungs was rationing, measuring each breath as if there might not be enough air to finish the thought.

The room lost its colour, not dramatically, not all at once, but the way light leaves a room when the cloud moves across the sun.

I thought about getting a glass of water. The kitchen was four metres away. I did not move. I was pinned to that couch by the sheer weight of everything that had collapsed, and the weight had no interest in letting me stand.

A FIST ON THE COFFIN

And then, a sound.

A knock. Not friendly. Not tentative.

A hard, percussive BAM. BAM. BAM. that shook the door in its frame.

My heart, a moment ago a sluggish and dying thing, exploded into a frantic hammering against my ribs.

Every thump was a scream of pure, primal fear.

Is it someone from the process? Has the ending already reached the door? Are they here to remove me now?

The effect was immediate. I froze. I did not breathe.

The knocking was a fist on the coffin lid of my new life.

And then it stopped.

Silence returned, heavier than before.

My ears rang with the absence of the sound.

It was someone connected to the mortgagee process. The message had already been delivered. The knock only made it physical.

But in that suspended moment I understood true fear.

This was the fear of being erased. From your own home. From the life you had spent everything building.

This was the fear felt when the world has decided you no longer belong.

GOOD FAITH

At one point, I was asked to put my name to a loan agreement connected to the business.

As I recall it, I understood the loan to be a short-term bridge, a temporary measure that would help us reach a resolution. I put my name to it.

What I did not properly check, or did not allow myself to absorb, were the terms. The interest rate was devastating. The agreement also carried a personal guarantee connected to my apartment.

I was not deceived into ignorance. I chose trust over scrutiny. I chose belief in him over self-reliance. I placed my home behind a stranger's promise and called it good faith.

That was the door through which everything left.

The biggest lesson of my life did not arrive as wisdom. It arrived as a paper on a door.