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**GLORIOUS  
SUNSHINE  
AWAITS**

**TRACEY FRIDAY**

# CHAPTER ONE

## *SYDNEY 1925*

'SILENCE IN COURT!' bellowed the judge, ramming his portly knuckles down onto the pockmarked bench to hoist himself up. Then, in sheer desperation, he picked up three bulky leatherbound ledgers and slammed them down with force. The action caused his expensive fountain pen to roll off the bench onto the wooden floor and he cursed through clenched teeth when he noticed the splash of black ink on his polished boot. He was utterly confounded because the aggressive thud had no effect whatsoever in quieting the unruly crowd.

Alice Johnson slowly squeezed her way across the room. It was no easy task. Her tiny body was being continually pummelled like she was caught in the middle of a herd of cattle that threatened to stampede. The men towered way above her, their sway causing fresh bruises on her already painful feet as each step she took became more difficult than the one before. It was scary, but she was used to the confinement. Managing to stay relatively calm, she fought to

plough through the raucous courtroom toward the exit.

‘SILENCE I SAY, OR I WILL LOCK YOU ALL UP, SO HELP ME GOD.’ The judge placed his pen back on the bench, thankful for small mercies that the nib showed no obvious sign of damage, then he reached under his robes for his pistol. He had no other option; the police were seriously outnumbered and the situation was escalating out of control.

The sleeve of his plush red robe plummeted to his armpit when he aimed the pistol to the ceiling and pulled the trigger out of extreme frustration. He cowered his head, half expecting the ceiling plaster to rain upon him from the thunderous shot but miraculously, it remained intact.

He was at the end of his tether and knew it was unethical but it had the desired effect as silence immediately replaced sonorous.

Alice jumped out of her skin from the booming shot and was on the brink of bursting into tears. It had taken her almost six minutes to work the room, being ever mindful of her father’s strict instructions that never altered beyond the need of getting the job done and getting out as fast as she could. She took comfort in knowing that her father was tracking her like a hawk even though he couldn’t clearly see her all of the time.

Suddenly, he sprang forward, leaping up onto the bars to feign escape by creating a distraction when his impeccable instincts told him that Alice was seconds away from being sprung. In response, the men roared and surged forward like a human tidal wave. He had taught his daughter well and knew this action created an added opportunity for Alice like

she was simply plucking apples from a tree.

The judge peered over his wire-rimmed spectacles at the men in the gallery below penned in like sardines. His round cheeks flushed from his recent exertion and the sheer humidity when he addressed them. ‘Last warning. Any more and you will all be fined and locked up for perverting the course of justice.’ Then, after he saw the policeman roughly push the accused back to his seat through the bars, he looked toward the foreman of the jury. ‘Mr Hargreaves, have you reached your verdict?’

‘That we have, Your Honour,’ he said, standing to attention, feeling somewhat important when he was instantly bombarded by a barrage of hecklers.

‘Q-U-I-E-T!’ the judge elongated. Once again, he extended the pistol to the ceiling. ‘Do the gentlemen of the jury,’ he said more calmly, ‘find the defendant, Mr Stanley Johnson, guilty or not guilty of threatening behaviour with a knife and malicious wounding with intent?’ Suddenly aware of his own threatening behaviour, he retracted his arm and put the pistol away.

Alice knew she was moments away from serious harm if she didn’t get out before the verdict was announced. The crowd silenced yet again waiting for the foreman to speak. In the nick of time, she managed to finally push her way out of the mass and was just within a whisker of the courtroom door when she stumbled and fell heavily on her hands. A stocky man bent down and picked her up then seemed to give her a quick hug before he ran out the door. Alice started to follow but she again tripped over her shoelaces costing

her precious time to regain her feet.

‘Not guilty.’

The split-second silence reverted to jeers and cheers. The boisterous men then shoved and shuffled their way as one fused form over to the bookie and surrounded him to claim their money on the outcome of the verdict.

‘Mr Johnson,’ shouted the judge. ‘You are free to go. Do not find yourself before my court again or I will personally lock you up. Do I make myself clear?’

The policeman stepped forward and unlocked the holding cell.

‘Perfectly clear, Judge.’ Stanley Johnson, aka Shiv, bolted out of the cell and roughly forced his way towards his daughter who was cornered by a growing mob of angry men.

‘Little thief,’ shouted one who was shaking Alice so tightly by the arms that her head rocked uncontrollably back and forth. His strong hands could have easily snapped her bones like a twig. He was snarling inches from her face. ‘Give me my wallet or I will take my belt to you.’

Alice’s eyes grew wide with fear and tears streamed down her angelic face while she tried her best to recoil from his pungent breath.

‘You animals. Get the hell away from my daughter.’ Stanley growled, shoving the men away while also grabbing as many as he could by the collar jolting them backwards before the two policemen descended into the throng.

‘BREAK IT UP,’ shouted one, managing to stand between the men and the child while the other scooped Alice up into his arms.

‘What’s going on?’ the policeman yelled, struggling to hold the men back.

‘I see it from back there,’ answered Stanley. ‘All of a sudden these villains turned on my daughter. What you gonna do about it? She’s five years old, for crissake.’

‘A thief’s a thief no matter what the age. You know that, Shiv. She’s your daughter, speaks for itself...’ roared one irate man, surging forwards. ‘Just shows you, don’t it? Her old man on trial and she’s working the room. My wallet’s been lifted and the little brat done it.’

‘She’s innocent,’ raged Stanley, snatching Alice from the policeman’s arms. ‘She just came to see her father. Shame on all of you.’

‘INNOCENT, MY ARSE. SEARCH HER!’ demanded a voice from the back. ‘Go on, search her. Come on. Do it.’

The policeman turned to Stanley. ‘Look, let’s get this done so we can get out of here. Put her down, please,’ he ordered.

Again, a quietness descended when the policeman crouched down. He smiled and asked, ‘What is your name?’

The men listened, wanting to hear what the child had to say for herself.

‘Alice,’ she said in a barely audible and shaky voice. Her shoulders heaved up and down when she gasped for breath then she wiped her button nose with her sleeve.

‘Righto, Alice. Are you carrying anything at all?’

‘A handkerchief in my pocket but I forgot to use it,’ she said and started to cry again.

‘That’s alright. I sometimes forget too. Now, hold out your arms like this’—he demonstrated for her—‘and I will pat your

sides, back and middle to prove to the gentlemen here that you have nothing to hide. Is that alright?’

Alice looked up at her father who gave a brief nod. After the policeman had conducted his search, the men looked confused at one another as one by one they said that they’d had their wallets stolen.

The policeman’s knees cracked in protest when he started to stand back up and said with more than a hint of sarcasm, ‘Perish the thought, gentlemen. Who would have guessed that we have a light-fingered pickpocket in this very courtroom? And it isn’t this little girl. Looks like she was just trying to get through the crowd to see her father. Now, if any of you wish to take this further, come down to the station and we will take statements. In the meantime, shame on all of you. Now, clear off before we arrest you all for wrongful accusation.’

The men had no choice but to disperse. Both policemen knew that none of the *alleged victims* would have been seen dead stepping into a police station of their own free will.

The irony was that everyone knew that they were all as bent as a nine-bob note and crooked to boot. They started to eye one another suspiciously when they lined up to receive their winnings to make up for their shortfall, hoping to God that the bookie hadn’t had *his* pockets lifted as well.

While he could not prove anything, the policeman who had spoken to Alice did have his suspicions. But what could he do without causing a further riot and furthermore, did he want to do anything about it anyway? They were all crooks so he wasn’t going to lose any sleep by not investigating as he

should. He wasn't sure *how* it had been done but there had to have been a third party or even more. The chance that they were still here was remote and even if they were, they would have to be downright stupid. While nothing surprised him anymore, and based on his gut feeling, he couldn't begin to comprehend that a father would ever manipulate his small child to rob inside the courthouse.

But then, who would suspect the sheer audacity?

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Stanley arrived home, slammed the front door and tugged at his tie to loosen the grip. 'Rose, you there?' he shouted impatiently up the stairs, annoyed that the knot of his tie wouldn't give way. 'Rose, get down here.' The humidity was getting to him, thus making him more irritable than usual.

Alice and Big Alf had arrived earlier and had sat waiting at the square kitchen table in silence, although the battered chair protested every fidget when Alice swished her legs to and fro. It was unbearably hot and her cheeks flushed a beautiful baby pink that complemented her light blue eyes. The open back door did nothing to alleviate the mugginess or the damn flies buzzing around their heads. Her feet still hurt when she wiggled her toes, and her long golden hair that her mother had plaited for her earlier that morning was beginning to curl from the moisture.

On the verge of getting down to get a drink of water, she changed her mind upon hearing her father's tone. Alice was confident that he would be pleased with her today but decided to remain put until knowing for certain.



She was fascinated that Big Alf appeared to float on air as his raincoat hid the chair and when he placed his heavy forearm on the edge of the table, her attention shifted. The edge was weak, causing it to dip and groan and Alice believed the table would collapse under the strain.

Regardless of the weather, Big Alf wore his trademark dark grey raincoat, tailored from a thinner fabric for the hotter months, over a smart black suit and waistcoat, white shirt, and black tie. He was fairing quite well considering he was in his early sixties despite carrying more weight these days. During his younger years, he had proudly sported a dark bushy moustache but now he was clean-shaven because it better suited his receding hairline. Ironically, his eyebrows grew bushy with age, and they enhanced his menacing brown eyes and intimidating tough image. He was the same height as his boss and some would say, that was where the similarity ended.

Big Alf fanned his perspired face with his fedora but it only intensified the heat. He stopped and threw it into the corner then ran his index finger around his shirt collar, causing the grime and sweat to spread.

The head of the house entered the kitchen and turned the tap, hoping for a cold drink. Stanley did not offer one to anyone else and gulped noisily, hoping to quench his thirst, finding that the water was anything but cold. He slammed the tin cup on the table that was barely big enough to accommodate four people, where Alice eyed the cup and prayed that there was a little left as she was now extremely thirsty. He turned to face Big Alf and his

eyes lit up at the stash of wallets, watches, jewellery and a multitude of cutthroat razors that were strewn beside Rose's dog-eared bible.

Stanley was in his mid-thirties. He was of average height and build with dark blue eyes, short dark hair and clean shaven. Ever dapper, he looked quite well-to-do in his dark grey suit, tie and waistcoat with a crisp white shirt underneath a set of black braces. This was his normal garb and not just reserved for court appearances. He was handsome enough but underneath the exterior lay a nasty, vicious and spiteful reprobate. He was a ruthless bruiser who would not bat an eyelid to cut, maim or kill if anyone dared to look at him the wrong way. He was also the type to sell his nearest and dearest, even for a minimal profit or for no profit, depending on what type of mood he was in. He never ventured outside the house without his trusted blade and was known only as Shiv by his associates due to his weapon of choice where he was only addressed as Mr Stanley Johnson on court days.

Rose entered the kitchen carrying a bundle of threadbare bed sheets that were almost transparent in places whereby it was a wonder that they did not completely disintegrate in the wash. She summed up what the haul on her kitchen table meant and could almost envision a bolt of lightning striking the table between the stolen property and her bible. Nonetheless, she smiled and praised her daughter and died a little more on the inside every time she did so. Appeasing her husband was fundamental in not receiving a beating, not only for herself but for Alice as well. Praising meant that

she approved when she was oh so far from it.

But what could she do?

After placing the sheets in the sink, she quickly tucked the loose strands of her long golden hair behind her ears that had broken free from her plait. She turned around and pecked Stanley on the cheek who thought that his once beautiful wife looked a little haggard lately. Rose was also in her thirties, slender and a little shorter than her husband and contrary to his thoughts, only needed a few good night's sleep.

Rose felt imprisoned and hated her life and husband for what he was doing to their daughter. Alice was too young to understand that what she was doing was not only wrong but that her father was subjecting her to extreme danger.

Above all else, her greatest fear was that Alice would turn out to be exactly like her father and there wasn't a single thing on this earth that she could do about it if they were to remain alive. Rose was trapped and she despised herself for being too damn frightened and afraid.

Over the last five years, Stanley had gradually drained the lifeblood out of his wife drip by precious drip, making her defenceless and above all, compliant. What made it crueller was knowing that he thrived on it.

The kitchen table frequently held piles of money while they lived in downright poverty and that was the bare bones that Rose just could not fathom. Stanley had the wealth, albeit dishonest, to easily afford a nicer place to live in on the better and safer side of town. He explained to her once that he did not want to draw attention to himself so they would

remain put. He and Alice were always well-presented and suitably dressed when they went off to work, yet she had to beg for money for the upkeep of the house and to clothe herself. He always kept a sharp eye on all their outgoings by making damn sure that she was fully dependent on him without a single coin to her name.

Rose used to love Stanley with every beat of her heart. But that had instantly changed after her arduous labour when the midwife stepped out of the bedroom to fetch more water from the kitchen. She had noticed Mr Johnson knocking back the whisky when she wiped her hands on her apron and, in passing, congratulated him that he had a daughter then proceeded downstairs.

Stanley had walked into the bedroom still clutching the bottle and with a gentle click, closed the door behind him. Rose instantly noticed that he never acknowledged the barest of glances in the baby's direction, who the midwife had wrapped in a blanket and placed in the middle drawer of the dresser for a makeshift cot.

Like a cyclone, his rage erupted from the pit of his stomach when he snarled and looked down at his wife's sweat-drenched brow in disgust. Quick as a viper, he slapped Rose hard across the face just minutes after she had given birth to Alice on October 1, 1920.

In complete denial, Stanley was confused. Why didn't he have a son? He had looked after Rose extremely well during her pregnancy and he could not understand her nerve in repaying him with a worthless daughter. *That* was the day Rose Johnson's life had dramatically changed for the worse.

Stanley convinced himself that he would be a laughingstock for not producing a son, and therefore, perceived as being half a man where he had mistreated and rated his wife and child insignificant from that moment on.

The midwife was barely down the stairs when the torrent exploded. 'YOU STUPID, INCAPABLE AND WORTHLESS BITCH!' he ranted within an inch from her face. 'What the hell are you playing at? Are you going out of your way to make a fool of me?'

Rose couldn't believe her ears. She was overcome with fear and shock because he had never struck her or used foul language in front of or aimed at her. Ever. The smell of whisky on his breath was overpowering. From the time he had slapped her, to now, he had knocked back several huge gulps. Her face was still stinging and she did not recognise that the violent man before her was the same gentleman whom she had married. Rose began to edge away by subtly shuffling backwards on her bottom, but it was not easy. She was extremely sore down below due to the midwife being rough in her haste to stitch her up.

Without anaesthetic, Rose endured eight stitches, tensing herself each time the midwife plunged the needle through her already delicate, torn and bloodied flesh. But the worst pain was when she yanked the thread through, causing a burning sensation as she clenched the edges of her pillow so tightly; she believed her tendons would pop. Most of all, she tried her hardest not to scream and frighten her baby and turned her head to cry out into the pillow. She tried again to recoil from him and felt a long trickle of blood ooze between

her legs where the headboard prevented her from moving any further backwards.

‘I’M WAITING!’ he shouted, expecting her to come up with a miracle. Rose was still stunned at his sudden turn of behaviour and foolishly put it down to him being drunk and that he would return to normal when the effects wore off.

‘She’s a beautiful baby, Stanley.’ Rose smiled in the hope of bringing him around. ‘I know we had Alan in mind for a name, but how about Alice? I think it suits her.’

‘Call *it* what you damn well like,’ he said despondently, glancing in the baby’s direction. He then turned back to his wife. ‘I still can’t believe what you’ve done to me, woman. Have you *any* idea?’ He started to pace like a caged animal while running his fingers through his otherwise well-groomed hair.

After a few tense moments, he said, ‘I’m off to the pub to drown my sorrows.’

‘But Stanley, I need help with the baby and I’m still bleeding.’ Her pleas fell onto deaf ears. ‘Stanley, please!’

He approached the doorway. ‘Rose, I really don’t care or give a damn. Perhaps someone at the pub knows of a boy we can swap with...’ And with that bright idea, he ran down the stairs and slammed the front door behind him.

‘YOU BASTARD!’ Rose screamed with all her might, causing Alice to wail. To prevent losing another surge of blood, she gingerly reached over the side of the bed and picked up her boot. Then, in quick succession, she used it to pummel the wall over her head to alert her neighbour for help as tears of despair flowed down her cheeks.