



**HIGH
RISK**

ADRIAN O'DONNELL

e-Reader

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PROLOGUE

Tony lay on the broken prison bed listening to the sound of a busy local prison shutting up for the night. It was still early, around eight o'clock, but that was how the routine ran here. "Numbers B wing?" a shrill shout requested.

"One hundred and seventy six," came a distant reply slightly lost in the hum of a hundred tunes emanating from the confines of the locked cells.

This had been a good couple of weeks for Tony and early release was certain. Promoted to the number one wing cleaner, a trusted position that gave him unsupervised access to all parts of 'B' wing, he just had to ensure that it was clean enough to keep the staff off his back for the next few days. In line with his newly elevated status, he had a cell to himself, a relief after months of sharing the cramped space with any undesirable chucked in with him. He stared at the photos stuck on the stark cell walls, held in place with toothpaste as had a thousand other pictures before. Two weeks and he'd be out, seeing his family for real and breathing the fresh air never smelt in jail. No longer would he be surrounded by badly painted walls, a floor showing burn marks from a million cigarette butts, the stale stench of tobacco and a stinking steel toilet which no matter how many times he cleaned it, the brown stains from previous use remained and the stench of urine oozed from the grubby floor. A line crafted from string stolen from the wing office spread across the cell ceiling, tied at one end to one of the thick bars protecting the window and the other end to a nail that had, using some unknown implement, been banged into the wall above the empty bed next to his. It was the only way to dry his few items of clothing after they were scrubbed in the steel sink, all a long way from the comforts of home he was so looking forward to. This part didn't worry him so much, but the faceless metal door that sealed him inside this putrid space, worse than any public toilet, was hateful. The fact that it could never be opened from the inside was soul destroying. The only way to get out of that cell was if a screw unlocked you - bad enough when you were supposed to be unlocked, impossible if it was not your turn. Still, at least he didn't have to share this room with anyone else.

The chaos of men making last minute deals, drugs, phones, tobacco, or as it was better known '*burn*' had melted away. The junkies had swapped prescribed tablets and other medications, mainly methadone which was always readily available, in their constant quest for sleep. Tramadol was also a crowd pleaser, he had never known so many young, fit people needing pain relief, and the endless depression of a night time locked up with only thoughts of separation from loved ones was the ideal moment to melt away into a drug induced release.

The hum of prison officer chatter came from a central area where staff congregated waiting for the last door to be locked and prisoners accounted for. Weekend plans, football scores, latest conquests, all were regular topics of conversation before they all went home to the needy wife and screaming kids. These snatched clips of conversation always made Tony smile. He longed to hear these sounds of home for himself; he was determined his life would be different this time and that he would never return to this hell hole.

Drifting off to sleep a short while later, the sound of shuffling feet and jangling keys whipped him back into the present. The door opened and the harsh light from the wing landing swept across the darkness. An officer who looked about sixteen years old turned on the main light and started a monotone explanation, the type he had already given ten times that evening as he found beds for the latest influx of new prisoners to the wing.

"The wing's full, you'll have to share your cell tonight," he explained as Tony blinked in the sudden harsh light. He didn't bother waiting for a reaction as he briskly said "In here," to the man standing just outside the cell door.

Tony looked up as the door clanged closed. A tall, athletic man stood with his back to the door, he didn't speak but just looked around the cell as though surveying a new bed sit for rent before carefully placing a book onto the top of the small, empty, broken locker between the two beds. He

sat on the side of the spare bed staring at unseen things before rolling onto his back, gazing up at the flaking paint on the ceiling. A chilly breeze rolled through the small broken window making Tony regret the time he had smashed it with a broom handle to get more air into the stuffy cell one hot summer night.

Lighting a thin roll up and inhaling deeply, Tony blew a cloud of smoke towards the nicotine stained ceiling. He looked over trying to work out any clues as to who his new cell mate was. He didn't look like a junkie and seemed at ease with his surroundings, implying he had served a bit of time inside. He guessed the guy was six feet plus, not an ounce of fat and a close shaven head that failed to hide a long jagged scar running from front to back. His arms showed brutal scars from years of cutting, all seemed old and healed but the razor blade had cut deeply across both forearms. He could have been any age between twenty and thirty, the pale skin tight on his face making him look gaunt. He smelled of prison, no fancy aftershaves or antiperspirant, another clue that this guy may have been transferred in from another prison.

The man still said nothing, just hummed a gentle tune as he lay on his back with his eyes closed. Tony had shared many cells with a host of people during his past prison sentences. This guy was different, he seemed confident, almost self assured. He exuded the kind of atmosphere experienced when an important person enters the room and the power seeps out of them - hard to explain, just different. Tony turned on to his side to face the newcomer, propping himself up on his elbow to get a better look.

"How ya doing mate? I'm Tony," he offered.

No response, just a continued humming of an operatic number. Suddenly the song finished and the man's eyes snapped open as he turned his head, catching Tony by surprise. Tony found himself looking into eyes which were deep and black, soulless and cruel.

"I don't like sharing a cell with anyone and I don't like the pictures of your shitty family so take them down." He fixed Tony with a gaze. "Now!"

"Listen mate, leave it out, I'm home soon. I don't need trouble. I'll try get you a cell on your own tomorrow, I'll speak to the screws, I can sort it," Tony found himself gabbling in his panic to appease the man.

"I don't need you to sort anything; I am capable of sorting everything out by myself just fine. You can speak to your screw friends, but I don't think they can help you." The undertones of menace in the man's voice had Tony jumping from his bed and carefully taking his photos down before placing them in his drawer. *Fuck that, a nutter, just what he needed*, he thought as he rang his cell bell for the last time. Footsteps approached the cell and a tired old night officer looked through the observation panel. Tony stuck his face close to the panel and hissed, "Boss, this bloke is high risk, and he shouldn't be sharing." The officer closed the flap. "Go to sleep son, it's not an emergency so keep your bloody finger off the bell." Resignedly Tony turned to climb into bed but was surprised to see the man now standing against the back wall of the cell staring directly at him. He felt the last of his courage evaporate.

"Honestly I don't need trouble," he pleaded. "I will move in the morning, just give me a break, I'm home soon."

The man didn't respond, he just slowly closed his eyes, lips moving silently as if in prayer. It was the most unnerving sight Tony had seen and a shiver swept up his spine as he climbed under his thin prison duvet. *I can make this till morning, then I'm out of this cell*, he convinced himself as he finally fell into a shallow, restless sleep.

Tony woke. He wasn't sure what had stirred him but as his eyes acclimatised to the dark, he looked across the cell and saw the stranger's empty bed. *What the fuck?* Before he could waste any more time on contemplation, a hand came from nowhere and clasped itself tightly over his mouth, followed by the glint of a razor blade as it cut into his cheek and straight through his right eyeball. There was no scream, that was absorbed into the powerful grip, but then a cold calculated draw of the blade across the throat meant Tony didn't even have time to plead for his life as death was quick

and callous. His unwelcome roommate then took his time, putting in eight hours of hard work with a teeny weenie razor.

The six thirty morning roll check would never seem the same. The fatigued old officer from the previous night attempted to look into Tony's cell but the observation panel had been blocked with newspaper. Unable to see in, he called out angrily, "Uncover your panel," and receiving no response, he jammed his keys into the lock with impatience. He was tired and needed to get home to bed after what had been a long, boring night shift. The door opened into the dimly lit cell where he could see one bed was taken, the tall man laid on top of the covers smiling. The other bed was empty.

"What's going on with you two?" He demanded, "Where the fuck is your cell mate?" He looked down, suddenly noticing a sticky mess on the floor, the dark oozing pool seeping from under the empty bed before spreading its reach across the floor. Blood splattered across the walls and ceiling merged into finger painting and writing as murderous messages adorned the cell walls.

"Find him yourself, and mark my homework officer. I am sure that you will be impressed ...oh, and don't forget to tell his family." The man then took a long deliberate drink from his plastic cup savouring the moment, the prison tea warming his stomach.

The door slammed shut followed by the chaos of clipped orders, boots pounding along the landing amidst shouts from other cells as prisoners were awoken by the turmoil within their wing. Then silence, five minutes of beautiful calm before the tinny crackling of the prison officer's radio broke the trance. Scuffling feet and hushed whispers brushed under the cell door before it burst open revealing the silhouette of staff formed up like an American football team ready for action, crash helmets glistening in the bright landing lights and a small plastic shield held purposefully by the lead person protecting the team.

"Stand up and place your hands on your head!" Instructions were yelled from one of the officers as adrenaline filled the cell.

"You really have no need to restrain me." The man sounded more matter of fact than scared – he was someone who knew the system.

"We will do whatever we need to do; we just need you out of the cell now." The man eyeballed the officer behind the shield, "Come and fucking get me then." A voice from behind the staff barked two words "Get him!"

Instantly the three staff entered. They were dressed in black overalls and helmets with visors protecting their faces. All had shin guards and heavy black boots with thick black leather gloves completing the look. The officer who came in first held the shield in front of the top half of his body while the others sheltered behind, peering for their target. He jabbed the shield forward causing a second of distraction while staff peeled out from behind and pinned the prisoner to the bed before twisting his arms up behind his back so high that he had no alternative but to lie there yielding to their efforts. He was dragged to his feet and pulled out of his cell, bare feet banging off every step encountered, tracksuit bottoms half falling uncovering light blue prison boxer shorts before being frog marched into a segregation cell, a cell with nothing in it whatsoever apart from the four bare concrete walls. Roughly handled by the staff as they stripped off his blood stained clothing and placed them in bags leaving him with nothing more than a rip proof blanket, he smiled inwardly. This had been a good night.

As the cell door clanged shut, he settled himself on the floor with his back to the rear wall, and gently hummed a distant tune while working out his next move like a chess grand master. He was close to checkmate although his opponent hadn't even realized the game had begun. Like a first day at school he had established himself and soon all would fear him. But this was just the start, the start to a long path of vengeance. There was one clear target ahead, and it didn't matter how long it would take before the ultimate trophy was gained. All in good time he thought, and that was something he had a good deal of. Some more work needed, more fear to be spread, more widows to be made, and more children to be left fatherless.

After an age, a face appeared at the observation panel of the cell. "Martin, how are you? Are you ok?" This was the kindness he had waited for, someone who thought that by using his name implied

they were friends. Someone who thought he was still human, someone who could be helped. Now for another chance to show them what he was made of.

“Yes, but I just need to talk to you. Can I talk? I can’t deal with what I’ve done, I need to talk.” Martin Heard looked up pleadingly before dropping his head into his hands in what looked like despair.

“I just feel like ending it all, I have nothing left to live for,” he continued.

The door opened to a sea of officers dressed in overalls and helmets standing observing, whilst a small man in a suit stood behind them. Martin looked back up; “Can I talk boss?” he pleaded again. The suited man walked past the officers and into the cell, just as Martin had hoped. He felt the razor blade sitting in the cheek of his mouth and moved it slowly with his tongue. The suited man didn’t know what had hit him as Martin, moving as quick as lightening, sprang from the floor like a panther, grasping an arm and in one move had him in a headlock slicing the blade deep into the Governor’s right eyeball. The blade now sat to the left side of the man’s neck and he gave it a tweak causing a small cut from which a trickle of blood ran down to his white collar before merging with the thick mess coming from the empty eye socket.

“Now fuck off behind that door, or this man is dead,” he calmly ordered the supposed protective team who had frozen with the horror of what had just occurred. The officers shoved each other in their panic to get out and the door slammed shut. Martin Heard had his prize.

“Right you little bastard, I think that you belong to me,” Martin informed the man while forcing him onto the floor. The man whimpered and crawled across the floor before curling into the foetal position, unable to focus as the blood streamed into his remaining eye. The pain was intense and cut through his brain.

“Stand up you spineless bastard,” Heard ordered him and grabbing hold of the waistband of the man’s pin striped trousers, he pulled his prey into a crouched position as the torrent of blood started to turn the cell floor into a macabre skating rink. Throwing him back onto the floor, Martin chuckled with delight as he pulled the clothes off the sobbing man, knowing full well that the staff would be watching through the observation panel in horror.

Soon he had him almost naked, wearing only a red pair of boxer shorts and again Martin laughed. He looked at the observation panel once more and could make out a wide pair of panicking eyes. Making a slashing motion he smiled, rejoicing at his own creativity.

“Look boys, look at the state of this white skinned, flabby, pathetic little man - I may even take his other eye out. He showed everyone the razor before pushing his back firmly up against the cell door. In spite of being manic in his behaviour, an element of rationality remained in his head.

“Now, I know that these doors can open both ways. If I hear you removing the anti-barricade bolts, I will kill him immediately. Understand?” A voice came from the other side of the door confirming that they understood. The watching Officer, so terrified of the events he was observing froze, unable to even report what was happening. He had a front row ticket and was hypnotised by the brutality.

“What’s your name Governor?”

“Roger,” the poor individual replied with what was to be his last spoken word.

“Come here Roger, we need to cuddle up a bit tighter.” Heard pulled him in between his own legs and in the blink of an eye Martin punched him hard in the back of the head causing him to black out briefly. He came to, a thumping pain growing across his head, stars buzzing around his eyes. Martin had taken hold of his tongue yanking it forward so hard he could feel the muscle tearing. The blade was brought to Roger’s face scraping his top lip and running slowly down his teeth before hacking the bloodied tongue from the open mouth and tossing it towards the rear wall.

The scream of pain and flow of blood was sickening. However this just seemed to spur Heard onto more action. Now in a full blood lust, nothing would stop the torrent of violence. The depravity of the attack was relentless as staff banged at the door pleading with him to stop. Stop? He hadn’t even started.

Rolling him over on to his back, he slashed aside the unfortunate governor’s boxer shorts and sliced into the small limp penis that had tried to shrivel out of the way, hacking it off and throwing it

towards the tongue at the back of the cell. In a final almost ritual ending, Martin sliced the unfortunate man's white flabby stomach wide open. Roger died on a blood soaked, stinking cell floor with help standing less than four feet away. Martin sat with his back to the door panting with exertion. The naked man lay dead at his feet, his body cut open and every bit of him exposed. Martin had considered cutting the head off but his enthusiasm had ebbed and he was bored. Besides, there was a limit to what he could do with one small razor blade.

He stood and walked a few paces, sliding on the pools of blood congealing on the floor. He looked around at what he had created and felt relief rush through his body. Wiping the blood from his face he shouted, "Boys, come and get me."

It didn't seem to take very long for the wheels of justice to turn in the case of Martin Heard, double murderer.

He stood in Court Number One at The Old Bailey, looking around at this working museum of law, where the very fabric of the country seemed to emanate from this one, large court room. If he hadn't been standing in the dock wearing yellow and green overalls stating that he was a prisoner proudly across the back, he may have enjoyed the scene. If it wasn't for the beating that staff had given him after the murder of their colleague, he may have felt a little less sore.

The barristers had pondered how this man could have turned from a petty criminal with minor convictions of theft, assault and drug offences with a few years inside behind him, into someone capable of such depravity resulting in violent attacks and murder to such a horrific degree

The question that nobody bothered to ask Heard was why had he killed these two seemingly innocent people? He would have told them if they had bothered. He would have been very clear about his intentions on that one day in HMP Barnside. Firstly, he despised pathetic petty criminals; they had stolen his possessions for far too long while living on the streets. They didn't deserve to share the air he breathed; poor, pitiful Tony was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The second reason was far deeper and a great deal more personal to Martin. Every adult who had materialised into his life under the guise of a kindly care home worker, priest, politician visiting the poor, parentless children, or even the cute little TV celebrity who popped into your room to boost viewing figures and then popped into your pyjamas when the camera stopped rolling; everyone who showed kindness eventually hurt him.

All these past horrors had resulted in Martin Heard, the petty criminal who had graced the courts on numerous previous occasions, but what turned him into a cold, calculating killer was having the one thing in his life which meant something to him being torn cruelly from him. What motivated Martin made him a dangerously damaged individual.

The Judge in his summary of the case was almost understanding of Martin. It seemed that society had allowed him to slip through the net. He needed to be punished for the horrific acts but he also needed help. He would never be released from custody in whatever setting it may take. However, it was felt that Martin Heard was not capable of presenting any defence. He was suffering such mental illness that confinement and treatment within the secure mental health setting could and would be the only option. He would be committed to life imprisonment without hope of release. The judge did however hope that he could make some form of recovery over the coming years. Very touching. Martin thought his face looked familiar and he wondered if he had ever visited a particular children's home in Bristol during the early 1970's.

After sentence was passed, he was hustled down the wooden stairs by a number of eager prison staff and into a solitary cell.

"That's you fucked, you murdering bastard! That Governor you butchered was a mate of mine, I hope you rot." The door was slammed shut as he was left to contemplate the rest of his life in confinement.

But unknown to all those concerned, on this very day Martin Heard's life became focused. It suddenly developed a real purpose. For in the evidence bundle, which he studied while waiting in the small legal room in the belly of the court, sat a small printed email. It read;

For the attention of Mr Jackson Edwards QC.

PROTECTED DOCUMENT

Attached are the details requested in relation to the child of Martin Heard.

In confidence information.

Born 23rd December 2007

Name Tom Heard

Fostered 23rd December 2007

Foster Address. Mr Terry Davies. 163 Horn Clear Close, Dudley

Case worker, Mr Chris Byfield

Not for the attention of the defendant

CHAPTER ONE

10 years later

Stephen Byfield sat eating toast in the large country kitchen of his Cotswold cottage. Tanya, his wife of five years breezed in and kissed him on the forehead.

“Have a lovely day sweetheart, I’m taking the children swimming this morning, and then popping out for lunch with a couple of friends. We’ll all be home around four, I’ll e-mail you later to see how your day is going.” Stephen smiled as he saw the twins jumping up and down with excitement; they loved the swimming pool and sliding down the elephant trunk slides.

“I wish I could come with you, sounds great fun.” He swallowed the last of the cold toast and washed it down with a gulp of tea. “I just need to get the prison working properly; I can’t take my eyes off anything at the moment. The instant I think that it’s sorted out, something else goes wrong, and it’s going to take some time to get right. But I can’t wait for some time off with you all.” He kissed Tanya and then grabbed both children in a big hug.

“Listen to me monsters, I don’t want you getting mummy’s hair wet.” He then winked at both of them; the children shrieked with laughter before charging off in a quest for more double trouble.

“Have fun Sweetheart and I’ll see you this evening, hopefully not too late,” Stephen told Tanya as he popped his plate and mug in the dishwasher and kissed her good bye before grabbing his bag and dashing out of the door.

Climbing into his new, gun metal grey, Audi A5 convertible, he drove through the winding country lanes on the way to work with the roof down. The sun glinted through the leafy trees and formed a geometrical pattern across the road as he contemplated that the day was too nice for work, but work could not wait. Of all the drives he had taken to various jobs in different prisons, this short five mile trip was the best. All leafy, country roads, no traffic and he could enjoy his brief touch with nature before the cold confinements of a concrete prison.

The formidable walls could be seen from more than half a mile away, an intimidating sight, even for the newly appointed Governor. He swept into the car park and backed the Audi into his reserved space thinking he really could get used to this VIP treatment. The gate area was a buzz of activity as he approached.

“Morning Governor, roll of six hundred and eighty nine,” an officer informed him.

“Morning and thank you,” Stephen replied to the information that they were nearing full capacity.

He walked through the sliding gate and past the metal detectors and smiled to himself. The first time he had reported for duty, the alarms had activated. He had forgotten that he had his phone in his pocket, a real basic error. Staff had not let him forget that one; he had put it down to nerves.

The new biometric key system was in place so Stephen scanned his finger print and took his keys. The new key machines were easy to use, it recognised a finger print, opened the machine door, and the keys that he could take were indicated by a green light. All he had to do was pull the keys from this contraption and go to his work place. Clipping his keys onto his key chain he headed out of the gate area.

A brief walk across a courtyard designed in 1878 for horse and cart and Stephen was sitting at his large wooden desk. A computer and phone sat on the left hand side, a photo of the family stood proudly on the right. A separate phone sat in the centre. This one was red, a direct line straight to him, with the number only known to a few. When this rang, everything else stopped. It meant business, normally serious business.

This position as Governor of Marwood prison was special, Stephen had been given the chance to take over a badly managed establishment where recent audit scores showed deep concerns and Her Majesty’s inspectorate had reported that it was a dangerous sewer of a prison. Damning words and the last Governor had been moved immediately with the stipulation that this must never happen

again. Stephen knew this opportunity could be the making of him but what he couldn't foresee was how close it would come to breaking him. He switched on his computer and began preparing for that morning's leadership team briefing.