

Excerpt from 'The Executioner'

Maggie Nash

The weather in Albany resembled the overcast conditions Madeleine Smith left behind her in Melbourne the previous morning. Not at all what she'd expected when she had begun her journey to the southern region of WA. Wasn't it supposed to be hot in Western Australia? She stretched a little, arching her back as she did her best impression of a Siamese cat after a mid-afternoon nap. The sustained yawn that followed came out unforced and all by itself, reminding her of how long she'd been on the road.

Okay, so it wasn't really that cold. If you stayed out of the wind. It wasn't such a bad place. If she looked to her left as her taxi drove through the back streets of town, she would see the most spectacular view of ocean she'd ever seen. The humungous rocky formations and small cone-shaped islands jutting out of the clear blue water, which lapped against pristine-white sand, were quite majestic.

It almost made up for the weather.

Almost.

She shivered despite the view. Her job with Gryffin Technology was a new start for her and she really needed to make a good impression. The summons to the special team building, adventure weekend came as a complete surprise, especially since she'd yet to commence her new role. However, the CEO's secretary had been insistent; she was expected to participate and no excuses would be accepted. Who was she to argue? It wasn't every day you get an all-expenses-paid adventure holiday in the wilderness of Western Australia. Besides, after her summons to the weekend, she'd lashed out and bought a wardrobe of new desert-proof clothes. It wasn't as if she'd get any wear out of them living in Melbourne. She closed her eyes, imagining herself in khaki shorts and a black t-shirt with her hiking boots, walking into the swish office block in the Paris end of Collins Street.

Nah.

She started giggling to herself but stopped quickly when she noticed the taxi driver peering strangely at her in the rearview mirror. *Oh crap.* Sitting up straight in her seat, she put her best blank face on. *He thinks I'm a loon! Better get back to serious business. The new job, yep...think about the new job and how great it's going to be.*

She craved the challenge the opportunity offered. Boy did she need it. Especially as her life pretty much sucked over the last six months since 'the breakup'. Floating from one loser-job to the next, she'd floundered her way from one end of the business centre of Melbourne to the other. Coffee shop vendors in Collins Street closed their shutters and shut up shop when they saw her coming rather than have her scare away customers with her melancholy 'woe is me' attitude. The black clothing fixation she'd adapted for the winter season didn't help matters any either.

What *had* she been thinking?

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