

THE ADAMANTINE DISCLOSURE

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CHAPTER 1 — CANYON CRASH

Nathanael Wayfarer was driving fast, too fast, around the corners of the Grand Canyon national park.

For some reason he had an ear worm, that old hymn, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me”, going round and round in his head. He gritted his teeth at it — as if the rest of the rubbish in his head that he had to put up with wasn’t enough.

His wife of twelve years had left six months ago, but that wasn’t the cause of the implacable mountain of despair he was now facing down.

As far as Nathanael could see, they had been negotiating the divorce amicably, even in the last few weeks. She had seemed happy with fifty-fifty. It had all been going smoothly, she had acquiesced to all his requests. But now it was obvious that he had been completely mistaken.

Today, his house-cleaner back in Australia (he’d asked her to open his mail and email anything important) had sent him an iPhone photo of the interim violence restraining order.

That’s the sort of thing that would have taken Debra eight or nine weeks to organise at least. She’d always said Nathanael was her rock. Well, now, he was her grindstone, but she still wasn’t the sharpest tool in the shed. Didn’t she realise they would both lose out if they started bringing lawyers into it? For God’s sake, Nathanael had been in the U.S. for the last four months, he hadn’t even talked to her for three. He had been doing the tour of the Grand Canyon he had wanted to do for years, the tour Debra hadn’t wanted to be part of.

All he’d been waiting for now was for her to email him the divorce papers.

So she was getting at him. Was it because he was enjoying himself for once? He had never so much as raised a fist at her, barely even raised his voice even once during their marriage. No, his own anger and disappointment tended to be directed inward. In fact, Debra had been the one who liked

throwing plates at the granite wall in the kitchen, destroying things, smashing cups on the stone floor tiles.

He pushed his foot down. He knew it was dangerous, couldn't be more so, nearly missed a corner, swerved past a car that had appeared out of nowhere, now here he was, skidding on the edge of the precipice.

Even as he was skidding, he glimpsed the glory that was the Grand Canyon, an ancient adamantine structure too big for his mind to take in, but he forced his attention back to driving.

He got control, skidded back onto the road. What had happened to the other car? Had he clipped it as he went past?

He looked in his rear view mirror and breathed a sigh of relief — they were sitting on the kerb, quite safe. He slowed down to the speed limit.

He didn't want to hurt anyone.

Not like Debra. She had wanted to hurt him. Is that why she had taken a VRO out on him? An act of spite, something a woman scorned would do, but the marriage had been dying of sterile fossilisation, not hatred or unfaithfulness. That was why Debra had found someone else, why she had left him.

Nathanael hadn't given her the child she wanted.

He looked in the rear view mirror again, still worried about the other car. They were fine, they were back on the road now.

He didn't see the elk until it was too late.

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He woke up smelling clean linen. There was dull, indistinct pain everywhere — something was pushing his awareness of it away. Drugs, pethidine, or morphine, maybe.

A woman's voice in an American accent said, "You're lucky. They tell me it was fortunate the car rolled onto the left side. Even the barriers might not have stopped you going over the edge." Nathanael tried to open his eyes, but he couldn't manage it for some reason. The voice continued, "It was a good thousand feet to the bottom. They are saying you would have been little more than a smudge right now on the rocks, if you had gone over."

He tried to respond, but there was a tube in his mouth.

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Someone was praying for him. An American woman's voice again. Was it the same woman? "Please, help this man. Forgive his sins, Lord Jesus, I know you already do, but help him to know that you do. Please save him. I don't know if he knows You, but heal him and help him and save him from death."