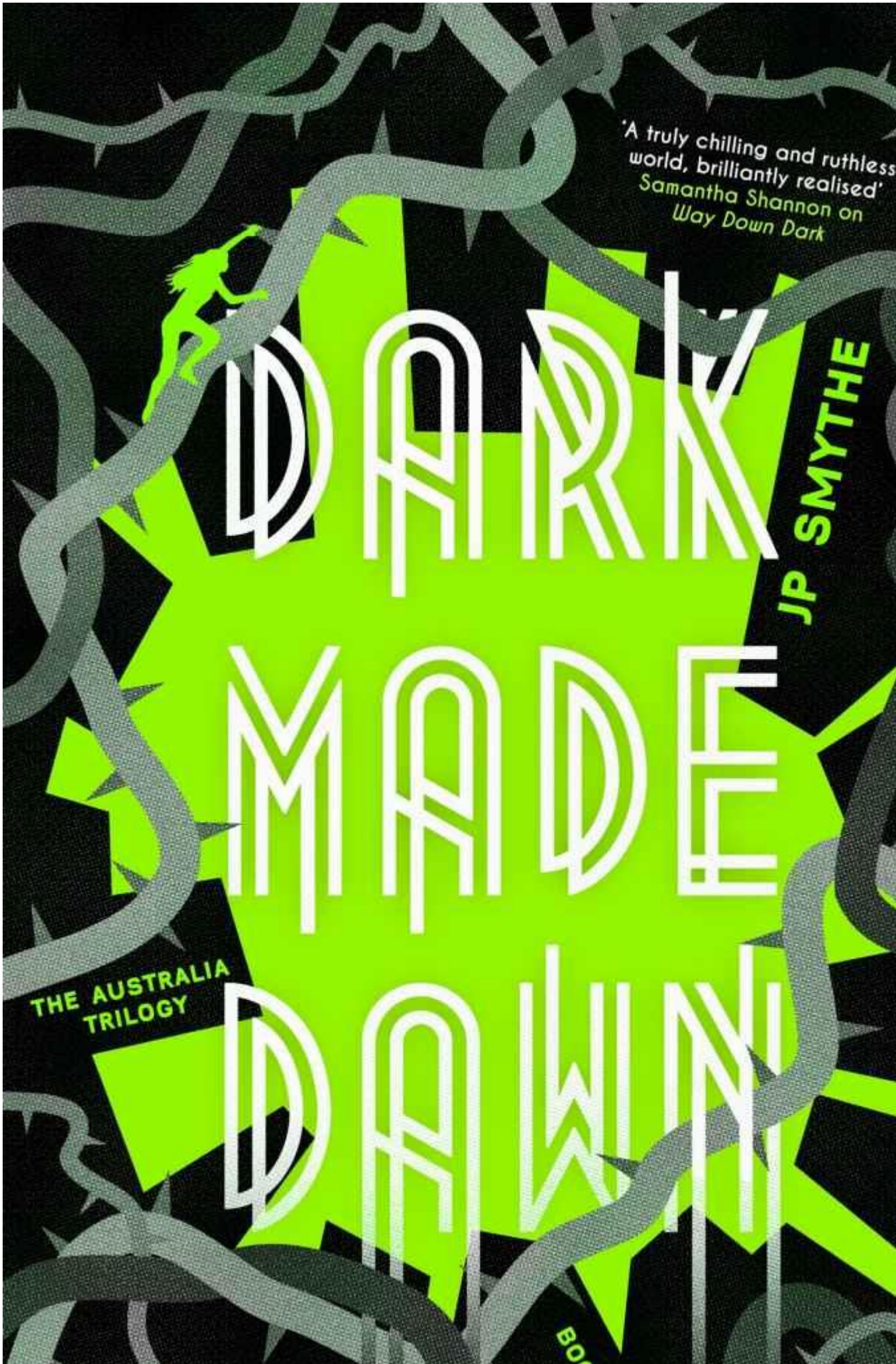
'A truly chilling and ruthless world, brilliantly realised'
Samantha Shannon on
Way Down Dark
DARK MADE DAWN
JP SMYTHE
THE AUSTRALIA TRILOGY

JP Smythe is an award-winning author. The Australia Trilogy

is his series for young adult readers. He lives in London, where he teaches creative writing.

Also by JP Smythe

No Harm Can Come to a Good Man
The Machine
The Testimony

The Anomaly Series

The Echo
The Explorer

The Australia Trilogy

Way Down Dark
Long Dark Dusk
Dark Made Dawn

Dark Made Dawn:

The Australia Trilogy Book 3

JP Smythe

HODDER & STOUGHTON

www.hodder.co.uk

First published in Great Britain in 2016 by
Hodder & Stoughton
An Hachette UK company

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 444 79640 7

Hodder & Stoughton Ltd
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DZ

www.hodder.co.uk

CONTENTS

PART

ONE

PROLOGUE

Outside the city walls, there are animals. They survived whatever happened before, and they're surviving now. Nobody in the cities really knows about them, or cares. They stay out of the way of people. The animals are terrified. They hide, cower in the scrub. The nomads who live out here don't hunt them, though. The people who live here want to preserve them. They want to leave them alone; nature is getting on fine without them. But some things can't do that.

Nature seems to be able to replenish itself. But some things? When they're gone, they're gone forever.

I've seen pictures of what these animals used to look like; I've seen a stuffed one in the museum, with its brown speckled fur and soft down. Deer, they're called. They weren't for farming. Everything used to be either farmed or wild, and the wild things were the ones that humans left alone. The farmed ones, humans ate or put to work. Horses could be used as transport, or to pull machinery that tilled the soil. People rode them, for pleasure. Cows and sheep and goats would be used for milk, or for their meat. But deer sort of existed outside that. In the wild. Humanity never really tried to tame them. People watched them from afar, and marvelled. How beautiful they were, and how still, how tranquil.

But the deer outside the city walls are something different. They are white. Their fur is completely and utterly white, no spot of colour visible. The insides of their ears are pink, their eyes are red. Everything else is a white so pure it could almost be no colour at all. Clustered in their herds, on the horizon, they are easy to miss when the sun crowns the day and it's hard to see because of the glare and the ground is scorched to near-white as well. When they stand on the rocks or near the sand of the beach, the place where they cluster to eat seaweed that has washed up on the beach during the night and cooked in the sun, that's when they're nearly invisible.

I see some, now. A small cluster of them, heads bowed, jaws working in this pleasingly gentle, rolling motion. I creep towards them and I hold my hand out. They look at me as if I'm the strange one. To them, I'm something to be stared at, quizzical heads tilted to one side.

Who is she?

'I'm Chan,' I say. 'Don't be scared.' I have food in my hand – kale, which we grow easily here, because it Thrives in the shade of the wall, growing thick and coarse and bitter – and the deer come to me, their heads tilted. I tilt mine, to echo them. Maybe that will make them feel more comfortable. Do as they do, and they might accept me. 'Don't be scared,' I repeat, as if the words mean anything to them. And they come, slowly, one by one. They don't know if they can trust me. There's one at the front, smaller than the rest, but more eager. She – I don't know for sure, but I suspect she's a female – has her mouth open, her tongue loose. She licks the air first, missing my hand. Tentative, she wants to know if I'll meet her halfway. I do, arm outstretched, palm open. And then her tongue is on my skin, hot and wet, and I can smell her breath, and the kale is gone from my hand. She scampers backwards, chewing as she goes.

I wonder if the vegetable tastes the same to them as it does to me. If they can taste how bitter it is, and how it needs boiling down to actually make it palatable. Maybe they simply don't care. Maybe, to them, kale is like chocolate, a delicious treat. That's how different we are as species. The others wait while she comes forward again, closer to me, asking for more. I have spinach in my satchel, some cabbage. I took whatever we had that nobody wanted because it was close to rotting. I give it to her. She takes everything. Some of it she tosses over her shoulder, and at first I think she's discarding the food, but then the others run to it. Too scared to come close to me, but too hungry to pass up what I have to offer.

Then they all trust me. They all stand in place, around me, and they wait as I empty the bag, as I feed

them or set the food on the ground in front of them. I step back to stop them nipping at my fingers. That's how hungry they are, how eager.

'Can I stroke you?' I ask the first who came to see me, but of course she can't answer, so I assume she won't mind. I run my hand over her head. Her white fur runs softly through my fingers. Like one of Alala's furs.

It feels the same, in some ways, as Mae's hair. Young.

I have this feeling inside me: that I still haven't done as I promised. She's still not safe. She's lost, and here I am, feeding deer, finding myself. It's been a year since we came here, and I can't stop wondering when she'll ever –

'Chan.' Rex half shouts, half whispers at me, from behind. I turn and see her: crossbow resting on her arm, her finger on the trigger. She raises the weapon. She's been hunting for birds, training herself, and that's been fine. But I won't let her hunt the deer.

'Stand away,' she says.

'Don't be an idiot,' I tell her. 'They haven't done anything.'

'Their meat is delicious,' she says. We found one a few weeks ago. It was already dead, had just died, but not by our hands. It was skin and bones, mostly, but Fiona showed us how to cure the meat, to strip it from the carcass, hang it, dry it, smoke it, to get these thin slices of amazing flavour, stronger than anything we'd ever eaten. We made it last as long as we could, but we ran out. I can almost see Rex salivating at the thought of eating more.

I am, too.

'Not these,' I say. 'We don't kill these.' The deer who first approached me comes close again, even with Rex's weapon pointed at her. She moves her head

under my hand, not for food but for the touch, to feel my fingers on her. I rub her ears. She shuts her eyes.

'They trust us,' I say. 'And they've not done anything to deserve being killed.'

'We are hungry.' Rex says it as if that's it, the only truth that matters.

'Not hungry enough,' I tell her.

In the end she lets the deer go and hunts for vultures instead. When she's done we walk back to the nomad camp. The fires are being lit for the evening feast. There are so many more of us than when Rex and I first arrived here. We've spent the past few months doing runs to the poorer parts of Washington, finding the people who were forced to run when Alala's reign over the docks came to an end. We've brought them here, made the numbers in the camp swell. That means more food, more fires, more tents and shelters.

Rex drags three vultures behind her, their feet tied with rope to her belt, their heads dragging in the sand. Vulture meat is delicious if you cook it for long enough.

She asks me why it's okay to kill the birds but not the deer. What possible difference is there, aside from the fact that the deer let us pat them?

'The birds would eat us if we died,' I say. That's what Fiona told me. That's her rule. If it would eat you, were it able to, then it's fair. 'The deer, they don't eat people. They don't eat other animals.'

'That just makes them weak,' Rex says.

I watch our shadows on the ground seeming to join up as one, before they're swallowed by the dark shade of the city wall.

1

There are things which, the longer I have been down here on this planet, living with these people, living this new life, I have started to forget.

I am forgetting the smell, the stench, coming up from the pit, down in the depths of Australia. It is a smell that I was sure would be with me forever. A pungent, bilious stink, that filled your nose and your throat and your head. If you were unlucky enough to catch a cold or some other virus, once you got beyond the pain in your head, there would be another unexpected benefit: the stench was gone. To have no sense of smell for a few days, no matter how sick you were, was almost a relief.

I am forgetting what it is to fight, to really fight for my life. To think, every day, that there is a chance I am going to die. For the first six months here, not fighting wasn't an option. I fought for food, for safety. I fought with Alala, with her junkies, with the police. I escaped and I ran, and then I met Hoyle, The Runner, and I got to stop fighting. After I – we – Rex and myself – struck a deal with him, everything became a little bit easier.

In the mirrored fronts of the buildings here, in the reflections of car windows and polished glass, I can see that I am getting a little bit lazier, maybe even complacent. I wait around. I am endlessly waiting. That is what working for the police involves. I exercise, but that's no replacement for *fighting*. Maybe that's okay, I tell myself. Because maybe that next fight, the one I haven't yet had? Maybe that will be the one to take me out.

And I am starting to forget faces. They slip away in fragments. I have forgotten how my mother smiled. That memory was the first one that I realised I had lost. What has stuck with me instead is her face in the final few days of her life: teeth gritted, jaw clenched,

eyes scrunched shut so tight that lines I'd never seen on her brow appeared, trenches running through her skin. I've forgotten Jonah's look of concern for me, never needed but always there. I used to find it reassuring. The first time I saw it again in Pine City, even when I didn't remember that he was Jonah, that he was somebody from my life, I felt that same comfort. But that memory is gone. And Mae's face. That's mostly gone too. I can't quite make her out any more. She was once so fully formed, so easy for me to conjure up when I closed my eyes, and now all of her features – her eyes, her mouth, the shape of her face – everything is foggy.

It's as if those memories slip away when I grab for them, and I'm left with an echo of what they were. What I picture isn't the same. It's not real.

But I tell myself that I'll know her when I see her again.

And I will see her.

Everything I've forgotten feels a bit like a dream, like a nightmare that I once had. But when I think about it too hard, it vanishes as if it's scared of me, and doesn't want to be caught. It doesn't want me, specifically, to catch it. And sometimes, when I wake up here, lying under my tent on the border of the city, surrounded by the sound of people feeling safer than they have ever felt before, and I'm warm and safe myself, I think that maybe I don't want to catch a hold of it either. Maybe, I think, Gibson was onto something with his experiments. Maybe it would be better if I forgot everything.

We get a message from Hoyle (I can't get used to calling him The Runner, even if everybody else on his team uses that name like it's the most natural thing in

the world). He sends us messages through the drone-birds, which are homed in on our trackers. They hover above us, waiting for permission to deliver their mail, and when we signal they drop down next to us. They're odd things. Apparently, way back when, they were designed to look like something called a helicopter, a flying machine thing, like a car with blades above it. The resemblance made it easy for people to understand them. But the more drone-birds there were, the more people got scared of them. They looked unnatural, and people didn't like having them in the air all the time. After the governments began to rebuild their infrastructures, the companies who made the drones redesigned them. They modelled the new shape on real, live birds. They gave the drones wings; eyes where the cameras were; feet where their scanners were; a glossy sheen to their outsides, like oily tar-black feathers. Their span grew as wide as my arms, spread; their bodies the size of my torso. Their weight is probably about the same as mine. Maybe more.

After the real birds died out in the cities, the drones became a natural replacement. People who had previously been afraid of the mechanical drones didn't mind them when they looked like birds. They *expected* to see them in the sky. People wanted to be reminded of the life that they had once had, that they longed for again. They wanted versions of creatures that used to be a part of everyday life, and now existed only outside the cities, in scraggly, distorted versions of what they used to be.

Today, Hoyle's bird lands, sits and waits until we tell it to deliver its message. It makes no movement. It's not like a real bird at all, when you're up close. Real birds twitch. They're restless. They hop and flutter.

They remind me of Rex, with their constant nervous movements.

'What have you got for us?' I ask the bird. The eyes flicker, blue light coming from them, projecting a holo of Hoyle.

He's calling us in. 'I've got something for you,' he says. 'Bring Rex. We'll need her.' Rex's ears perk up.

'What is it?' she asks, but I don't have a clue.

'He has never specifically asked for me before,' she says. She worries about it all through breakfast, and then as we get ready, dressing and arming ourselves for the city. No crossbows inside the walls. Out here, we dress for comfort: for the heat and the sun, and then the cold at night. In there, we try to fit in.

In the city, survival is all about blending in.

I watch Rex from the corner of my eye as we dress. She folds the arm of her jacket down, over the space where her hand once was, and she pins it rather than lets it hang freely. She likes it better that way. She has boots. I have sneakers. Mine are flimsy. They're falling apart; they aren't built for the abuse I give them. Hers are sturdier, but I don't understand how she can wear them all the time. They're uncomfortable, thick and too tight. And her feet stink when she takes them off. She'll go for a swim in the ocean to cool down every night – she's specifically trying to cool and soothe her feet – but then, every morning, she puts them right back on. I said that we could get her new shoes, but she refused. She likes them; who am I to argue?

Ready for anything, we move into the shadow of the wall and walk towards the gate. Anybody else in our nomad city would use the underwater tunnel if they needed to get inside the walls. We did, the first few times; and then Hoyle asked why we never used the gate. He'd given us passes to get in when we first

started to work for him, but we didn't understand how they worked, not exactly. We didn't know we were free to come and go as we pleased.

We'd never had that anywhere before.

When we arrive at the gate, the guards raise their strikers and riot shields. They're afraid of us. It's nice to know we still look at least a little dangerous. We let them scan us, and we wait while they double check that the information they've got is correct, because they can't quite believe it: that we nomads from outside the wall are allowed to come and go as we please. Our passes don't have any information about us, not even our names. We discovered that when, one day, Rex put her hands onto the duty guard's uniform and dragged him over his monitor. Teeth bared, she snarled, 'Tell us what you know about us.' He showed us the screen. No information at all, just *Permitted Access*. And, above that: *Redacted*. No other information at all, not even pictures.

It's as if we don't exist.

There's always a car waiting for us, just inside the city's entrance. It's always the same car. It finds us, wherever we are, whenever we need it. It's a black marked car, police symbols on the side, no driver, with Gaia greeting us with our names when we step inside. And it always takes us where it's been told to take us. Ordinarily a car would ask where we want to go. We don't have any say in the matter.

While we drive, Rex pushes herself close to the window and stares out at the city. I think about myself when I first got here; how amazing I found this place – impossibly tall glass structures, all in the shade of that imposing wall. An impossibly busy city. People like I'd never seen before. New clothes, new hairstyles, new faces; skin dyes and augments and bodymods and

tech enhancements. The cars, the birds. It was so jarring, so difficult to take everything in, to understand the rules of this place that had been here long before I existed. The history, the buildings, the people, the way of life.

For me, everything before had been constraint. It had been closed up, boxed in. Darkness. And then, here, there was light.

Sounds like something from Jonah's testaments.

Rex used to ask me what things were. She wanted orientating, context. She asked the same questions that I'd once asked Ziegler; so I gave her the same answers.

And after a while, the questions stopped. Now she stares in silence out of the windows, just as I do. Now, we both watch, soaking it all up.

Waiting.

Hoyle's accommodation is just the way I remember it being the first time I met him. It never changes. It's as if it looked exactly like this when he was given it, and now he lives here, and he's never made a single change. He barely has any possessions, even. I've got enough things in my own shelter, outside the walls, that it feels like my own. A painting that Fiona did of Rex and me one day, when we were fishing. A tatty copy of the book that Ziegler wrote about me. Some writing I have done myself, recording my memories. I hope that if I write down everything that I remember, I might stop forgetting it.

But Hoyle's room doesn't have any of that. It's white and clean and clear of anything that could tell you anything about him.

Until today. Today, there's a pitch-black sheet on the room's solitary table with something lumpen and

bulky underneath it. When we walk in he's holding the corner of the cloth with one of his gloved hands, eager to pull it away. He's excited to show it to us, whatever it is. We don't often see him excited when he calls us in. Nervous, yes. Worried, definitely. Never usually excited.

'I have been waiting for this,' he says to Rex. She stands at the back of the room, near the door. That's where she feels most comfortable. 'I've got a present for you, Rex. Sorry it's taken so long.' She doesn't say anything. She's nervous, quiet, shifting her body to a position of drawn-back hesitation. She's not nearly as eager as he is. 'I've been working with the city's tech people,' he says. 'You're getting the absolute best. This is even more advanced than mine, I think. Stronger, faster reaction times. Took a lot of pulling strings to get hold of it; but then, you've done a lot to help us out.' He pulls the sheet away, and there's an arm. From just above the elbow down to the hand. It's so shiny, the fake skin that covers it glossy and smooth, as if it's been covered in oil or sweat. The colour is the only thing that gives it away as false: it's as white as the deer.

Rex's face is frozen. I can't read her.

'You like it?' Hoyle asks.

'It's an arm,' she says. Hoyle nods, smiles this half-laugh of humouring her. He finds the things she does, the way that she reacts – or sometimes doesn't react – amusing. He says that everybody else is what other people think about them. Rex isn't. She's herself, and she couldn't give a damn if you don't like her. Hoyle likes that. He says it's refreshing. He hoists the arm up – I get no sense of how heavy it is, because his own limbs are far stronger than the ones he would have

been born with – and he walks to her, holds it up to her.

'You put your arm in here,' he says, holding the false skin that covers the arm apart; and Rex rolls up her sleeve and slides her own arm into the hole. She's tentative, as if she's reaching in to pull something from a fire. There's a snapping sound, and she winces for a second.

'Okay, so there'll be a tiny bit of pain,' he says. 'It's got to hook in to your nerves. It's going to feel like getting an injection. You okay with that?'

'Yes,' she says. She tries to act as if pain doesn't faze her. But I know different. She braces, and Hoyle squeezes the arm just above the wrist, and there's a slight hiss from the mechanism inside the arm. Rex shudders as it pulls tighter to her body, hooking up to her.

Then it's done, and the new limb drops limply to her side.

'It doesn't work,' she says. I can sense her frustration.

'Just wait,' he says, 'it's calibrating. Patience in all things,' and he looks at me, and he smiles. Then we watch as the new limb's fingers tremble and twitch; as the false skin changes colour, shifting to match Rex's own skin tone; as the arm itself tightens and adjusts around her skin, pulling itself even closer.

And then, she lifts her new arm, holds it to the light, moves the fingers, one by one. There's a twitch on her lips: not quite a smile, but definitely not the stoic freeze that was there moments ago.

'Comfortable?' Hoyle asks.

'Yes,' she says. She sounds assured about it.

'You got the first one of these in the world.' He grins. 'Newest tech on the market. I'm not even getting these firmware upgrades until next month.' When he smiles,

the scars on his face seem to fade away to nothing. People here seem too concerned with what they look like. Hoyle doesn't care about the scars. He wears them like badges of pride, just as I do, just as everybody on Australia did. And when he talks about them, I can tell that their permanence means something to him. 'Look, don't think of it as a replacement for what you've lost: think of it like you've found something that's even better. This arm isn't a replacement, it's an advantage.'

'How strong is it?' she asks. There's a glint in her eye.

'*Strong*. The old hydraulic ones were stronger, but they sacrificed control. This one, you have total control over.' He steps back. 'Give yourself some time to practise with it, and once you're good it'll crush pretty much anything. Lifting things will still be a function of the strength in the rest of your body, but your grip will be unbeatable. Yeah, it's pretty powerful.'

'I could crush a bird,' she says. Her voice is casual, matter of fact.

'Absolutely.'

'And your skull.' She looks at him seriously, eyes calculating. As if she's trying to work out the logistics of such a deed.

'She's joking,' I say, quickly, because I think that sometimes I have to stress these things. People don't realise when she's joking and when she isn't. Sometimes, even I'm not sure. In those cases, I assume she is. Easier that way.

'I know,' Hoyle says, and rubs my arm reassuringly. 'It's okay,' he adds. 'Rex and I are good. I know when she's screwing around with me. Right?' She smiles. It's still an unnatural movement for her. Like it's taking all of her willpower to move the muscles in her face into the proper position.

‘I’m very funny,’ Rex says.

‘And those jokes about crushing my skull will never get old.’

‘You’re welcome,’ Rex says. We’ve been working on politeness.

‘Just pleased I could do something to help,’ Hoyle says. And he means it, I can tell. The way he says it, the slight nod when he smiles, that’s how you know. ‘There’s something I need from you, though.’

‘Of course.’ Rex understands bartering. She gets a new arm, Hoyle gets us to do something for him. ‘You need somebody captured.’

Hoyle smiles again. It’s a different smile from before. There’s a sadness there, a realisation that we’re not just visiting him for fun. That this arm is to help Rex do what Rex does. Rex will do the things for Hoyle that he and his people don’t want to – or can’t do. Things that even I won’t do. But Rex? She doesn’t think about it quite as hard as I do. She doesn’t worry about it, and they don’t worry about her.

‘We don’t need them captured,’ Hoyle says.

He doesn’t say it outright, but it’s clear to us all; he wants somebody killed.

After Alala died, we gave all of her files to Hoyle and his team. She had been holding information on old-school physical burner drives – ignoring Gaia’s cloud, which is what most criminals do, we’ve been told. She had stuff on hundreds of people in the city, stuff that the police didn’t have a clue about. Terrorism, murder, drug smuggling. Outside the city, people can do pretty much anything they want. If they can stay away from the law, then they can get away with it. But the bad things that happen outside the city, Hoyle has explained, seep through the walls eventually. He’s not

talking about nomads like us: he's talking about the tribes, the gangs who live in abandoned places, who make drugs, who traffic in people. It's all the things the inhabitants of the cities never actually see, never get exposed to. Hoyle explained it once. You can't impose a system that will make everybody happy. It's impossible. And sometimes, the unhappy people end up doing whatever they can to make the others suffer. Bitterness or regret or rage, they're fuel to do bad things. On Australia, it was violence; it was death. But here, it's drugs, and it's terrorism. It's the way people have always been, Hoyle said. Since forever.