

Chapter 1

Naked Punishment

August 1978 Los Rosales Prison, Ceuta, North Africa.

‘Well Alan you have surprised yourself now. You’ve managed to get some kip in this hellhole. Well fucking done!’

Lifting the top half of my naked body to a ninety degree angle my broken ribs crunched and sent shooting pains through my body. I looked down to my balls; thank Christ the swelling had gone down. I had a gentle feel of my enlarged testicles and the dull ache from the kicking and rifle butts had all but gone. Well that’s one good thing. After inspecting the bruising on the rest of my body, a shot of positivity poured through my veins. I am healing. However my mental state was far beyond repair. I couldn’t shake my guilt. Poor fucking Danny! Shot and killed because of my plans to escape.

I slapped the side of my face hard. Come on Alan! Danny wanted it like the rest of us. We had to try. We had to. It’s not our fault he succumbed to having the epitaph to die trying. Come on Alan, remain positive! You need to keep your head! Sanity is the only fucking thing these spics can’t take away from you now. Come on, live for Danny!

‘The poor blond French bastard!’ I shouted out loud as a tear rolled down my cheek.

As I got up from the cold dark flagstones that carpeted my cell I tried not to yelp out loud just in case one of the Spanish guards was outside to hear. They had heard plenty of my screaming several days ago. Bastards! I hated the fact I had to scream but as John McGlaughlin said they would have killed me if I didn’t. They would never have stopped the beating. I owed John my life. Without him shouting to me, I

would have been another mother fucker dead, forgotten and swallowed by the Spanish judicial system.

I had a flashback of the night my injuries were caused and carefully dissected the actions of each guard. I imagined myself executing unspeakable violence and cruelty to each one of them. Above all, one would pay the most. That was the director’s son. The image of him whipping me with the thick metal chain and huge fuck off padlock would never leave my mind. It sickened me to remember his manic eyes shining in the night as he lashed and lashed my ribs with zeal and pleasure. I thought he would never stop.

There were two reasons why I despised the director’s son the most. Firstly was because of his age. I was in my mid thirties and he was barely twenty. Being beaten by someone still wet behind the ears was a huge dent to my ego. Even though I knew I would have easily beaten the weedy fuck if we had fought mano y mano. The other reason was because he found his weapon of choice resting unused on a prison door. It was not enough to strike me with a club or rifle butt like the other guards used. Oh no, this little prick wanted to be inventive and find something that would really crush some bones. Each time he struck me with the solid padlock I could feel my ribs crack. The pain was sickening.

I bet after the savage beating he ran to tell Daddy how he and four other guards hit the fuck out of me. Sad really as that venom I have for him still remains to this day. I really should let my bitterness subside and replace it with another more pleasurable experience. Such as my time in Oslo with Bo and two other prostitutes. But that’s another story.

Before I allowed myself to think about how long I was to spend in my solitary punishment cell I decided I needed something to do. I had already spent four days in

here, but they were consumed with writhing in agony and clinging onto consciousness. But fuck me there was not a lot to do when the only furniture that adorned my cell was stones. I did not have a sink, a bed or even bedding. My toilet was just a stinking hole in the floor. I had nothing!

However I was not going to allow myself to dwell, that was the sure road to madness, if I was going to spend the next few years in here I was going to try and retain my sanity. I was not going to mark on the walls the days I had spent in here; that would be far too depressing. Although this was common in the many British prisons I had been too, I never saw the point. By marking down the days spent in jail till release would surely only prolong the agony?

Mind you I never saw one marked wall or calendar in Los Rosales prison. That was probably because the people in this prison, either like me didn’t actually know how long their sentence was to be, or that it would be a time consuming hobby as I had heard the majority of Spanish prisoners faced sentences between thirty to one hundred years. Now that would take a lot of wall to write on.

So stones it was to play with. I marked out a grid that consisted of sixty four squares with eight rows and columns. I neatly shaded the alternate squares. Well I could afford to do it properly, there was fuck all else to do. I rounded up all the stones and placed them on the squares a row in from the side on both sides. Then, with foil, I molded crude shapes resembling to me two kings, two queens, four rooks, four bishops and four knights. The foil was from used cigarettes packets. I had collected the foil yesterday when I was allowed my one hour solitary exercise in the normally communal patio.

After several hours work I stood back and admired my chess board. My satisfaction lasted only a few seconds, my shining moment was disturbed by the jangle of keys rapping the door and two short, sharp, thuds.

‘Senor cohones!’ a gruffled voice shouted from behind the door.

The door sharply opened and two Spanish guards entered my pit. They looked at me like scum, naked, bruised and dirty. Whilst they stood there clean in starched pressed uniforms, their turquoise blue shirts free from filth and their shiny buttons glistening in the sun. The blond guard was tapping his baton into his open hand whilst the shorter, fatter and more Spanish looking guard was carrying a bucket of water. I stood up, closed my eyes and held my breath so my ribs wouldn’t be shocked. I knew what was coming next. I heard the familiar whoosh as the guard threw the bucket of ice cold water onto me. I don’t know why they did this. Maybe it was my crude form of a shower as there were no washing facilities in my cell. Possibly it was to add to my punishment. But I would have preferred to have gone without. Standing naked in front of the two guards as they doused with me with water was a bit too homoerotic for my liking. Although I would catch them staring at my cock, they seemed to prefer looking at their trophy of bruises on my chest. With that I shuddered and shook myself like a dog; wiping with my hands the drips of water that were tickling my skin. I had no towel to dry myself off. I just had to dry by the heat of the Moroccan sun coming through the bars of my pit.

Then after the bucket wash, my breakfast was brought in. It’s soup. Thank god it was soup. Soup was the one of the least disgusting meals you could have in this place. I especially liked the black crunchy things the soup contained. They did taste quite salty but they were very flavoursome. They must have been a local herb of some kind

or weird Moroccan pepper. The other meals you could have would be paella or grey slop, each containing ungutted fish or pig trotters.

The guard with the soup and bottle of water walked towards me. His thumb firmly gripped on the bowl causing him to make contact with my food. I tried not to think about his fingers and his grubby blooded hands contaminating my already probable health hazard of a meal. He carefully lowered it gently to the direction of the ground. Right at the very last minute he smacked down the bowl allowing most of the contents to go over me, on the floor and on my neatly crafted chessboard. Thankfully it was lukewarm so it didn’t scold against my naked skin, but he did piss me off dirtying my chessboard. However, I wasn’t going to give him the satisfaction of knowing he’d upset me. I contained the venom that flowed through my veins by gulping hard and sinking it into the pit of my stomach.

‘Gracias,’ I said grinning wildly.

My sarcasm did not translate to the thick bastard as he seemed annoyed and confused at my gratitude whilst strutting back to the door. The other taller blond guard stared at me for a while, still tapping his baton in his open hand a few times more. Eventually he turned away and sauntered with arrogance out of the cell, his keys smashing his thigh with every stride. After several seconds the door was slammed shut with a bang, the echo from this crashing noise would ricochet around the room making my whole body jolt. Every time they would go to shut the door it seemed to take longer and longer, prolonging my anticipation of the clamour.

I waited until their footsteps faded away and all I could hear was my own white noise again. It felt sweet relief when I knew they were far away. I settled myself and sat cross legged on the floor and ate my soup, crunching hard on the black bits and slurping down the other unknown lumps. The water went down in one as I was so

thirsty. The last four days was a haze so maybe my liquid intake wasn't so good.

Putting my cup and bowl to the side of the room, my stomach gurgled and groaned and my throat felt scratched and dry. I was still hungry and thirsty.

Right, where was I? Oh yes, playing chess. So as I am playing chess with myself I will have to remember who went last. I mean which side I played on last. Maybe I should call myself two names. Oh fuck! Maybe playing chess against myself wasn't a good way to stop the onset of madness. I am not even into a game yet and I am already planting the seed for a split personality. Oh well, at least I will have someone to talk to.

I sat on the side I called Alan 1, very original I know, but I was excited to have something to do so fuck the labelling. Right, what to do? I moved the small stone / pawn that was in front of my king one square. I then moved over to the Alan 2's side. I pondered for a moment and moved my pawn that was in front of the castle. That is interesting. Now what is he thinking there. That was a bit of a strange move. Then Alan 1 moved the bishop on the side of the king three squares going diagonally. I scurried round to Alan 2's side and moved the rook into a ninety degree L shape. As I played and played I started not to notice myself moving from side to side but genuinely believing I was playing as a disembodied self. It was hypnotic and consuming, constantly thinking and thinking on ways to outthink myself.

Then a loud bang came from above. My reality and consciousness flooded back into my body. For a few milliseconds after the jolt, I could feel myself looking around the room as if I had been outside it. In some strange way I had as the chessboard engorged me into its world.

I jumped up to try and look through the bars of my cell window to understand what the bang was. Had someone got on the roof? Had someone jumped off? Were they

pushed to their death? The bang came again but it was definitely from above so there was no point in wasting my energy trying to look out the window. I stood still and arched my head to one side, directing my ear in line with the sounds. After several minutes listening and concentrating, there was nothing but silence.

Annoyed at being awakened from my game I shook my head in dismay and returned back to the game. Right, where was I? Oh yes, it was the turn of Alan 1. I looked at my pieces and then over to Alan 2’s. What could I do now? How could I trap him?

I held in my index finger and thumb a pawn that took my interest and flitted back and fore with glances to my side and to Alan 2’s. Whilst staring at my piece below, I could see in my peripheral vision, one of my chess pieces moving. Oh fuck Alan you have gone mad. Frightened to look, I paused for breath. I closed my eyes and told myself I was mistaken. With a flash of bravery, I stared hard back at the stone. There was no movement thank fuck. Then a few moments later the stone turned around and I could see a face. If I had enough stomach contents I think they would have been in my mouth at this point. With more courage I got up and moved in to have a closer look in the dim light of my cell. On closer inspection, I could see the stone was in fact a rat. I was very glad I wasn’t hallucinating but I fucking hated rats. But in that moment I was thankful for the germ infested rodent, at least it was something different than a stone to look at.

The rat looked back at me, his whiskers going ten to the dozen with his beady eyes gentle and glazed. I looked around my cell trying to work out where the little bastard had come from. Then the rat came in closer.

‘Hi little fella. You come to visit another dirty rat?’

I stayed still not to frighten the little mite, although quite frightened myself as not a particular fan of vermin. However, my curiosity triumphed as I kept my nerve and stayed still revelling in the fact that I had never seen a rat so close up. I was amazed at how fast his whiskers oscillated.

He then shuffled over to my bowl. He turned back to look at me. I did not move. He then started licking my bowl. With every few licks bobbing his head up to see what I was doing. I sat rigid and let the little bugger lick my soup bowl clean, I had finished it anyway. I was fascinated by the rat, his every action left me mesmerised. He looked round again and stared into my bewildered eyes. Then slowly and lightly he scuttled closer and closer towards me whilst sniffing in the air. Without warning he ran up my leg. He stopped again carefully watching my face and body for any signs of imminent movement. Once he saw all was calm, he proceeded to shuffle up towards my knee.

Although it was only a rat, it felt nice to be in the presence of another living creature. It was a comfort not to be alone. Although I had regular visits from the guards I did not look at them as possessing life, rather the takers of life, sometimes in its literal sense. Like Danny.

As the rat travelled up my leg, I started to feel a little anxious being naked. The guards had stripped me of my filthy clothes and left them outside the door as a sort of added extra to my solitary confinement. Personally I think the beating, the stark loneliness in this solitary confinement cell and no bed was enough, but oh you have to hand it to them they punish properly.

The rat stopped at my kneecap and raised his two front claws, moving his head from side to side whilst sniffing in the air. I cupped my genitalia to avoid tempting the rat with my dangly offerings. If he had tried to nibble them I would have had no

hesitation in smashing his brains against the wall. That would disturb me as I am very fond of animals, now particularly this rat, who I decided to name Bob.

Bob went back down on to four claws and travelled half way up my thigh. Once he reached my hip bone it felt too close for comfort. I slapped my thigh sending shockwaves through my skin. The rat stopped in his tracks, turned round and scarpered off a hundred miles an hour into the darkened corner of the cell. I shuffled onto my feet as quick as I could; I darted my gaze into the shadows but I still couldn’t fathom the little fuckers entrance. I have since learned that rats can get into holes that are only a half an inch wide.

‘That’s right ratty. I had enough problems coping with the men in here wanting to explore my gonads never mind you ‘n’ all. You can fuck right off!’

‘You lost it English bastard. You gone Ceuta mad!’ shouted a disembodied voice from above.’

‘Hey man! Who is that? Where are you?’

‘It’s Chino man. My cell’s above you.’

‘Nice to hear you..... Oh and I am not fucking English I am Welsh. And I am not mad I was talking to a rat.’

That statement sounded better in my head. After several seconds the words caught up with Chino, and he began to bellow with laughter. His chuckles and snorts brought a glow in my heart and made me break a smile on my dirty face. I had missed his broken English and strange accent that incorporated both Chinese and Moroccan twangs. I wish I could have seen his friendly face as he had such an infectious smile. Out of all the lads in the prison, Chino’s smile seemed to beam the most, but this could have been down to the fact he was constantly stoned. Being one of Ceuta prisons main drug dealers, he could afford to as he always had a constant supply.

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‘You okay down there?’ asked Chino.

‘Yeah I’m alright.’

‘The boys were worried.....they thought.....’

‘I’m alright it will take more than a good beating to keep me down,’ I quickly replied filling in the silence.

‘Hey Alan you want Bob?’

‘My rat?’

‘No Bob Bob’

‘Who the fuck is Bob?’

‘The one and only Bob.’

What the fuck is that supposed to mean? Had Chino turned the other cheek, literally? Then my thoughts about Chino being gay subsided as the mellow tones of Bob Dylan blared out loudly from above, travelling down the concrete wall softening them a little and bringing light into the darkness of my cell.

After a few verses of ‘Mr. Tambourine Man’, the music screeched to halt.

‘Oi you fucker, I was enjoying that!’ I screamed

‘Alan, I want your help to tell me what he says.’

‘What?’

‘I want you to tell me what he is singing about. I don’t get it.’

‘Oh I see.....Err.....get me a joint and I shall tell you.’

Several minutes went by. The silence near killed me. I thought I could cope alone in here for god knows how long. But having the conversation with Chino, Bob’s music and the thought of hashish made me feel depressed. This distraction had made me realise I missed my compadres in the communal cells. It’s funny that I craved to be in my own cell rather than be in the cells when I was in the main prison of Ceuta.

Now I have the opportunity to be on my own I realised this is not what I wanted, especially under these conditions. It was laughable that I thought the main prison was bad. I also wanted to ask him about Danny but I couldn’t pluck up the courage. I wanted to hold out hope he was still alive and didn’t want it to be confirmed he was dead.

‘Hey Alan look outside your window,’ shouted down Chino.

I looked outside the barred window to see what Chino was on about. I could not believe my eyes, as I saw on a fashioned rope dangling the best present in the world. She was beautiful. A big fat juicy rolled up joint full of the Moroccan best, lit up in all her glory. Like a kid on Christmas morning I stared at my present marvelling in the moment before enjoying its splendid properties.

‘Can I drop the rope yet?’

‘Not yet man. Hang on! Hang on!’

I woke up from my dream and scampered to the window. It took me several attempts to jump up and catch the dangling string with joint in tow. I stretched my arm and body to grab her, straining my broken ribs and making my bruised body throb. Once I held her in my hand, the pain in my body and mind melted away for an instant. As I held her to my lips, I paused for a second before drawing in the biggest toke of my life. My lungs hated me with every second as the air reverberated on my battered ribs. It was worth it though. This was the best joint of my life.

‘How’s that man?’

‘It’s alright,’ I said nonchalantly.

I really wanted to kiss his dirty filthy feet for this present, but I would never tell him that. He wanted my help with Bob so I had to make him think that he needed me more than I needed the blow and this conversation.

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‘So we have a deal, you gonna tell me about Bob?’

‘Yeah you got a deal but...’

‘But...what?’

‘But I will only start on my second joint.’

‘Alan you push your luck, but deal,’ Chino said laughing.

With that, he played the song all the way once and then as promised he lowered down a second joint. I again clamoured to the window to retrieve my prize but this time with less vigour. As I grabbed the joint I could see she was extinguished from all her glory.

‘Oi Chino you fucker it’s not lit!’

‘What?’

‘I need fire.’

‘Oh I’ll send matches down. God Alan you really hard work.’

Again he kept his word as a bundle of matches was promptly sent down. I retrieved them from the high window and lit the end of the joint until it was the colour of amber. I then lay down on my bed of flagstones ready to enjoy being stoned and the understated beauty of Bob Dylan’s songs.

‘Are you ready now Alan?’

‘Yes. What do you want to know?’

‘Why the fuck is he talking about a guy with a tambourine?’

‘Well let me see.....he is talking in the song about a guy playing the tambourine as a song..... However a guy with a tambourine can’t really play a song can he..... So maybe the tambourine doesn’t represent a musician but rather someone or something that inspired or influenced Bob Dylan..... A person maybe or it could be drugs.’

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‘Drugs! It’s about drugs!’ shouted Chino above excitedly.’

‘Really?’

‘Maybe.....I mean when he says ‘play a song for me’ is he really asking for drugs? Also when he says ‘I am sleepy and there’s no place I am going to’. It’s like us man were stuck in here bored off our tits..... so what are we to do?’

‘Get high!’ said Chino excitedly.

‘Damn right!’

Chino laughed and then remained quiet for several minutes. Although I could not see him I imagined his face smiling and connecting with Bob on a deeper plane more than just with the tuneful music.

‘So what drugs Alan?’

‘Well..... he says ‘jingle jangle mornings’. To me that sounds like a hangover so alcohol and possibly hash as it sounds a bit spacey.’

‘Also he talks about the ‘magic swirling ship’. So that’s sounds a bit trippy to me maybe.....maybe he likes the old LSD. ‘

‘Really?’

‘Hey Chino, you and Dylan would have got on great you love Hash and a bit of Californian sunshine’

‘He does sound pretty cool Alan.’

‘Time for another one?’

The second song he played by Bob Dylan was Señor (Tales Of Yankee Power).

Señor (Tales Of Yankee Power)

**Senor, senor, can you tell me where we're headin ?
Lincoln County Road or Armageddon ?
Seems like I been down this way before
Is there any truth in that, senor ?**

**Senor, senior, do you know where she is hidin' ?
How long are we gonna be riding ?
How long must I keep my eyes glued to the door ?
Will there be any comfort there senior ?**

The music cut out and Chino stopped talking. I could tell something was wrong. Maybe something was going down upstairs. Fight? Rape? Who knows? Well I couldn't get involved so I shrugged my shoulders. Still stoned and infused with inspiration by Dylan's music I flailed around the room like a mad man. Singing at the top of my voice and dancing to a melodic beat that only I could hear. Over and over I repeated the words from the last song he played 'How long must I keep my eyes glued to the door? Will there be any comfort there senior?'

Then there was a rap at the door. It was the guards coming to give me my evening meal of fish gut slosh probably. I didn't care that they were coming in I was free and happy so I carried on singing and flailing. Once they opened the door and looked at me they then looked at each other confused. I decided to strut around the room once more in the style of Mick Jagger. I was happy and in my stoned mind thought maybe I could get a laugh out of these guys. With that I continued dancing until I stopped in the middle of the room and wailed at the top of my lungs 'Senor! Senor!' whilst smiling and giggling. As I looked back, I noticed the blond guard shaking his head. Whilst the shorter stockier more authentic looking Spanish guard charged towards me.

I stood still as he launched into me. He grabbed my left shoulder in a vice like grip and swung with all his might, a right hook across my chin which sent shockwaves through my cheekbone. Shocked more than anything, I did not wince in pain and clutched my jaw in confusion. Then not looking satisfied with his first punch he hit me again, this time in the shoulder. I was angry now and decided to stand my ground I wasn't been knocked down easily. Stupid I know as this was not a fair fight but I continued to take the beating and remain standing. However, after a dig in my

exposed bruised ribs, I went down like a sack of shit. The pain was agonising. I couldn’t bear to breathe. Coming round from the shock I could see the guard looking down at me on the floor. With a smile on his face and a nod he seemed to accept this was enough brutality for the day. And thank god too. With that he beckoned to the other guard that they should leave.

The taller blond guard smiled at the abuse I received and swiftly turned around to leave the cell. They probably left feeling all warm and fuzzy inside from a nice days beating.

I remained on the floor clutching my aching ribs until their footsteps had trailed into nothing. I was bemused for several minutes as to what had just happened. I mean there was no reason for it. How the fuck can they justify beating me up for doing a bit of dancing? Unless they thought I was taking the piss by shouting ‘Senor Senor’? But still! Can’t they fucking handle a bit of banter? Actually, what the fuck was I saying! I knew in my two months in Los Rosales that the guards hated happy prisoners and shunned any conversation, let alone banter. Their only means of communication seemed to be via their fists. But it didn’t matter how much they beat me I wasn’t going to shut up. They could break my body but they couldn’t break my spirit. I was determined to find a way out of Los Rosales.

I looked down at my naked and battered body crouched on all fours like a dog. Two months ago I could never have imagined in my wildest nightmares to have been in this situation. My life two months ago was all about wearing sharp suits, travelling the world and meeting the most glamorous of women. If it wasn’t for being caught smuggling cannabis across North Africa on what was to be my last ever trip, this place would have never entered my head. The trip that was to set me up for life ended up to be my downfall. Right now I should have been with my working girl, Bo,

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travelling Europe pondering on legitimate business ventures with £90,000. In today’s money £90,000 is just shy of half a million pounds.

I wonder if things would have panned out differently if my associates had accepted the offer from Howard Marks, instead of us three going it alone.