

Emma Viskic's critically acclaimed Caleb Zelic series has been published worldwide. *Resurrection Bay* won the 2016 Ned Kelly Award for Best First Fiction and an unprecedented three Davitt Awards. It was iBooks Australia's Crime Novel of the Year, and shortlisted for the UK's prestigious Gold Dagger and New Blood Awards. *And Fire Came Down* won the 2018 Davitt Award for Best Novel and was longlisted for the Dublin International Literary Award.

Formerly a classical clarinettist, Emma's musical career ranged from performing with José Carreras, to playing at an engagement party that ended in a brawl. She learned Australian sign language (Auslan) in order to create the character of Caleb Zelic.

### Praise for the Caleb Zelic series:

‘There is no Australian crime hero like Caleb Zelic. There’s no Nordic, American, English or French crime hero like him. He lives in a genre of his own: the perfect outsider in an uncaring world. Inventive, loyal, tormented and whip-smart, he stands at the moral centre of a twisting tale of corruption. *Darkness for Light* takes Emma Viskic’s deaf investigator to the limits of his considerable abilities.’ – Jock Serong

‘Another clever, brilliantly observed novel from Emma Viskic. Viskic just keeps getting better. Her prose is elegant and economical and her storytelling is taut, realistic and full of surprises. Caleb Zelic is the perfect character to explore Melbourne’s diverse culture and all aspects of its society, high and low, ugly and beautiful. *Darkness for Light* is a winner.’ – Adrian McKinty

‘*Resurrection Bay* is an Australian thriller at its finest. A captivating read from first page to last. In Caleb Zelic, Viskic has created a character with depth and heart who will linger long after the final page.’ – Jane Harper

‘This is a terrific book and the writing is sharp, punchy, visceral and propulsive. The story grabs you by the throat from the opening pages and it never once slackens its hold. But what really brings *Resurrection Bay* to vivid life is the integrity and humanity of its characters. I love the world that Emma Viskic has created, in all its complexity and in all its truth. More please!’ – Christos Tsiolkas

‘Emma Viskic is a terrific, gutsy writer with great insight into the murkiness of both criminal and heroic motivations.’ – Emily Maguire

‘[A] stunning debut ... original and splendidly plotted with a harshness that nevertheless allows humour to intrude. Above all, it has a superb cast of main characters.’ – *The Times* (Crime Book of the Month)

‘Outstanding ... a gripping and violent tale with a hero who is original and appealing.’ – *The Guardian*

'More than lives up to its hype ... Fierce, fast-moving, violent ... it is as exciting a debut as fellow Australian Jane Harper's *The Dry*, and I can think of no higher praise.' – *Daily Mail*

'Trailing literary prizes in its wake ... superbly characterized ... well above most contemporary crime fiction.' – *Financial Times*

'Viskic's characterisation, dialogue and plotting are on par with some of the heavyweights of crime writing.' – *Sydney Morning Herald*

'An outstanding debut novel.' – *Newtown Review of Books*

'Viskic combines nuanced characters and thoughtful plotting in her impressive sequel to *Resurrection Bay* ... a brilliantly realized flawed lead.' – *US Publishers Weekly*

'Viskic has balanced first class character development with palpable violence and suspense.' – *Booklover Book Reviews*

'In [Caleb's] second outing, *And Fire Came Down*, Emma Viskic again delivers her skillful touch of humanity in another gripping story ... even more difficult to put down than the first.' – *The Big Issue*

'Zelic's second outing doesn't disappoint: Viskic's prose sprints along, sprinkled with Australian colloquialisms deserving of *Kath and Kim* ... Great stuff.' – *The Courier-Mail*

'Viskic's descriptions of place are often so intense you can smell them.' – *Spectrum*

'This outstanding debut from Australian author Viskic is fast-paced with gut-wrenching twists and an engaging protagonist.' – *Daily Express*

'One of the most intriguing recent protagonists of Australian crime fiction.' – *The Australian*



**The Caleb Zelic series**

Resurrection Bay

And Fire Came Down

Darkness for Light



EMMA  
VIISKIC  
DARKNESS  
FOR  
LIGHT

A CALEB ZELIC THRILLER

*echo*



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*For Dad*



*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;  
who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;  
who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.*

ISAIAH 5:20



# 1.

A children's farm was a nice change. Clandestine meetings were usually held in dark pubs, not urban pastures with good sightlines and pleasant views. Half an hour before closing time, a few families were still out wandering the gardens and gazing at cows. Crisp air and deep-blue sky, a lingering warmth to the late afternoon sun. Melbourne autumn at its best.

Caleb paid the staggering entrance fee and headed down the path at a brisk pace. The five-block drive from his office had taken twenty minutes thanks to roadworks, and everything about this possible client screamed anxiety – the anonymous email address and lack of phone number, the request they meet immediately.

A feeling of lightness despite the rush to get here: the end of a good day, in a good week, in a greatly improved year. Thank God.

Caleb reached an enclosed garden with amber-leaved trees. Fluffy chickens were scratching at the ground, their feathers moulting like snow. No self-described stocky man in a charcoal suit. No men at all. Just a mother and her bandy-legged toddler offering grass to the disinterested birds. A glimpse into a possible future: a small hand in his, Kat by his side, an afternoon together in the sun. The mother turned and said something to him. Her words were too fast to catch, but her expression was clear: *Go away weird, smiling man.*

He left.

No one was waiting on the other side of the gate, or by the barns. Looked like Martin Amon was a no-show. A bit of a surprise; the man hadn't come across as flaky in their brief email conversation. No worrying overuse of capital letters or exclamation marks, just a few blunt sentences that gave the impression of someone used to taking charge. Maybe it was just as well. Odds were, Amon was an uptight manager worried about minor fraud, but his urgency could also signal something more ominous. The exact kind of work Caleb avoided these days. He only took safe jobs now – employee checks and embezzlement cases, security advice – nothing that could bring fear and violence back into his life. A lesson finally learned after his brother. After Frankie.

He looped around the far side of the garden for a final look. More chickens here, three of them pecking at a darkened patch of grass near a wooden shed. Small lumps of something pale and glistening. A cloying smell, like a butcher's shop on a summer's day. He knew that smell, still started from his dreams with it thickening his breath.

He stopped walking.

A long drag-mark led from the birds into the shed; wet, as though someone had slopped a dirty mop across the grass. Stray tufts of down had stuck to it, stirring gently in the breeze. White feathers, stained red.

Bile rose in his throat.

Movement to his right, the mother and toddler coming around the corner towards him. The child gave him a gummy smile and offered a fistful of grass. No air to speak; no words. Caleb put up a hand and signed for them to stop. The woman froze, her mouth opening as she noticed the pallid flecks and damp grass, the chickens peck, peck, pecking. She scooped up her child and ran.

He should run, too.

Should turn and leave and never come back.

## DARKNESS FOR LIGHT

He skirted carefully around the chickens and followed the long stain to the doorway. No windows, his eyes slow to make sense of the shadows. A peaked wooden ceiling, high stacks of hay against the walls. The man was lying on his side by the door. Charcoal suit, a few extra kilos softening his stocky build, sandy hair matted at the back. No face, just a bloodied pulp of flesh and bone.



# 2.

They left Caleb to wait in the farm's cramped office, surrounded by posters of children and plump cows, half-drunk cups of tea. By the door, a bored constable sat in a swivel chair, flicking through her phone. Dark outside the room's lone window, night falling hours ago, along with blanketing exhaustion. A temptation to rest his head on the cluttered desk and sleep. No idea what he was waiting for, just that the homicide detectives had been about to let him go when they'd received a phone call and conferred hurriedly outside, asked him to stay.

Amon had been shot. A bullet to the back of the head, exiting his face. Caleb didn't know a lot about guns, but he'd seen the devastation they could wreak on a body. Had felt the hard kick of one in his hand, the warmth of another man's blood.

He started as the constable leapt to her feet. Two suited men were coming through the door, both taking up a lot of space for not very large people. A quick flash of their IDs and a few impenetrable words to the constable and she left, closing the door behind her. Both men gave Caleb the cop once-over as they crowded into the room; one smaller and clean-shaven, his mate with a brown goatee like a half-eaten rabbit. That beard was going to be a problem, concealing most of the man's bottom lip, and all of his top one. When the hell had Victoria Police started allowing its employees to have facial hair?

Beardless pulled the free chair in front of Caleb and sat, but

there was nothing settled about him: feet flat on the floor, eyes constantly moving. Rabbit-face perched a buttock on a low filing cabinet, even tenser than his colleague.

‘Thanks for waiting,’ Beardless said. ‘Makes this all a bit easier.’

An easy read: clear and steady, his voice faint, but audible. Caleb almost sagged with relief – he was too tired to lip-read any mumblers.

‘Sure,’ he said.

‘Our colleagues in homicide say you don’t need an interpreter.’ The detective’s eyes slid to the hearing aids he couldn’t possibly see beneath Caleb’s dark hair.

‘No.’ Caleb fought the urge to check his aids were covered as he asked the obvious question. ‘You’re not homicide?’

Beardless paused before answering. ‘AFP.’

Federal cops interested in a state crime. And cops not eager to share their names. The murder felt professional, not just the silencer the killer must have used, but also the shot to the back of the head. Organised crime, maybe?

‘Why are the feds interested in Amon?’ Caleb asked.

‘We’ll ask the questions if you don’t mind, Mr Zelic.’ Beardless pulled Caleb’s phone from his pocket and passed it to him. ‘We’ve had a look at the emails between you and Martin Amon. What else can you tell us about him?’

Caleb could push it, ask to see their IDs and get his homicide mate, Tedesco, involved. But that would only drag him deeper into whatever foul mess this was – and ‘Make Good Decisions’ was his new motto. Very new motto. Plastic wrapping just off, a new-car smell to it.

‘Nothing,’ he said. ‘The emails are it.’

A low rumble as Rabbit-face spoke, the fur parting slightly, then closing.

Shit, even worse than Caleb had expected. No point turning

up his aids; amplification wasn't going to make the man's voice any clearer, or his mouth more visible. Had to admit defeat. 'Sorry, I can't understand you. The beard's a problem.'

Beardless gave his mate a flat look. 'We're in agreement, then – the face-fur's got to go.' He pulled a bound notebook from his breast pocket and flipped through it. 'So the first contact you had with Amon was an email saying, "I need to speak with you immediately. Utmost discretion required."

'Yes.'

'And that was enough for you to meet?'

'It's not unusual. I do business fraud – no one wants their shareholders knowing about a light-fingered employee.'

'Had you heard of the deceased before? Someone mention him? Say he might be in touch?'

'No.'

Disappointment in the detective's expression, quickly hidden.

'Even a vague comment? No name used?'

'No.'

'You speak to him at all?'

'No.'

'Not even a few words?'

'His face was gone. It made lip-reading a bit tricky.'

A long stare for that; milk-coffee eyes, a little bloodshot. 'On the phone, I meant. You said you were running late – you call to let him know? Maybe use a public phone? Borrow one?'

'I don't do voice calls.' Caleb hesitated, then added. 'Can't.'

Beardless covered his mouth and spoke, watching Caleb carefully. It'd be the usual adolescent test, something foul and personal, probably involving a close relative. Caleb gave the man a dead-fish stare until he lowered his hand.

A little glance between the two cops, and Beardless slipped his notebook away. 'Thanks for your help, Mr Zelic, you can go now.

For your own safety we'll keep your name out of it and ask you not to mention Amon to anyone. Online or in person.'

Caleb didn't move. The cops obviously knew a lot more about Amon than they were letting on. If he pressed them they might let something slip.

'Are we going to have a problem?' Beardless asked.

Make Good Decisions. Whoever Amon was, his murder had made two feds rigid with tension. Getting involved could only lead to trouble.

'No.' He stood and walked to the door, went out into the clear night air. Didn't look back.

# 3.

Caleb was almost at the café when he saw the car again: an anonymous black sedan with tinted windows and a mud-spattered numberplate. The third time he'd seen it since leaving his office. Hard to know if it was following him or if he was just being jumpy. Twenty-four hours since Martin Amon's death, his adrenal system was still in overdrive. He adjusted the rear-view mirror, squinting in the dying light: one car back and holding steady.

Decision time.

The small shopping strip was just around the corner. Pull over or keep driving? Most of the stores would be closed at five-sixteen on a Tuesday evening; not enough witnesses around for comfort. But better than none. Past the shops, there were only factories and warehouses.

He slowed as he took the bend, then sped up and pulled into the kerb. Door half open, eyes on the mirror. The black sedan rounded the corner. It drew nearer, headlights off, the driver a hazy silhouette. Closer, nearly level. Passing. It kept going, the brakelights flashing once as it reached the next bend, then it was gone. He breathed again. Just someone taking the same traffic-avoiding route across town. Nothing to do with him, or a dead man with his face shot off.

The news reports hadn't revealed much so far. No mention of Caleb or Martin Amon by name, no possible motive suggested,

just a lot of speculation. An online search hadn't revealed anything on Amon, either. Which meant the man had been habitually cautious, or using a pseudonym.

Caleb sat for another moment in the rapidly cooling car, then got out and headed for Alberto's Place. The small café fronting the street was closed, but the kitchen staff would still be hard at it, readying orders for shops and hotels across Melbourne. Pies and pastas, sausages, pastries, all made to old family recipes. He'd grab some swoon-worthy food and surprise Kat with a picnic dinner at her studio, reassure her that he wasn't backsliding. She'd been worried when he'd told her about Amon last night, would still be worried.

He ducked down the laneway to the back of the old redbrick building and stopped outside the glass door. The kitchen's high ceiling was deep in shadow, the only light coming from candles, torches and phones set around the room. They were propped on shelves and benches, their combined wattage illuminating every hand movement and expression of the workers inside. Six people, all managing to carry on signed conversations as they cooked, their Auslan only slightly hampered by their latex gloves. Weekend plans and boyfriends, grandchildren, fitness regimes. Alberto Conti prowled among them, his hands never resting as he issued instructions and tasted dishes.

Caleb shoved his hearing aids in his pocket and opened the door, moved into silence and warmth. The aromas of frying garlic and onion, roasted walnuts, oregano. He received a staggered round of waved hellos as each person noticed him, the most exuberant one from Alberto. Seventy-two years old, sinew and bone, burnt-leather skin. Not the fellow runner Caleb had initially assumed, but a former featherweight boxer.

He gave Caleb the usual rib-cracking hug, along with a slap on the back. Something was seriously off about the man's

strength-to-weight ratio. Forty years older than Caleb, a head shorter, but it'd be close odds in a fight.

‘The power out?’ Caleb signed when the wiry man finally released him.

‘No, we’re being romantic.’ Alberto made a suitably lovesick expression to go with the beating-heart sign. He pulled a heavy-looking canvas bag from a shelf and placed it ceremoniously in front of Caleb, a hint of real reverence in his face now. ‘I’ve given you pork belly instead of sausages. Best you’ll ever eat.’

‘Kat’s not a big fan of pork. You want me to check the fuses? The power’s on in the rest of the street.’

‘It’s under control. She’ll like this pork. Better than your mother could make if she slept with the butcher. With the pig.’ But he slipped a large quiche into a cardboard box and added it to the bag. ‘How’s Kat? She OK?’

‘Yeah. Good.’

‘I don’t understand you two. You should just move back in together. Particularly now.’

Always a moment to re-acclimatise to Deaf directness after a week in the hearing world. And to wonder how Alberto had managed to extract more personal information from him in four months than most people did in years. Decades.

‘It’s on the agenda.’ Caleb stilled. Through the servery hatch, a glimpse of a car driving slowly along the street, no headlights against the encroaching gloom. Maybe grey, maybe black. It passed without stopping.

Alberto waved to get his attention. ‘I’ve decided to get those security bars you’ve been going on about. Can you organise it?’

‘Sure.’ The street was empty now, no passing cars, with or without headlights.

Another wave from Alberto. ‘Tomorrow?’

Caleb gave him his full attention. After months trying to

convince the man to up his security, why the urgency? A lifetime as a signer had made Alberto's face as easy to read as his hands: he was worried and trying hard not to show it.

'Something wrong?' Caleb asked.

'Yeah, I got sick of you nagging me.'

'Alberto, what's happened?' He realised he'd accidentally spoken out loud, and stopped.

Alberto's lip-reading skills were as proudly non-existent as his speech, but he'd obviously got the gist from Caleb's expression. 'You worry too much.' He patted Caleb's hand.

Leave it. Alberto obviously didn't want to tell him, and mixing friendship with business was always a mistake – another lesson learned since Frankie.

Caleb checked the street and slung the bag of food over his shoulder. 'I'll get on to the installer first thing.'

He received another hug and escaped outside with his ribs intact.

An empty laneway; no hiding spots or lurking attackers. He headed for the street. Dusk had slipped into night, bringing with it the scent of cool earth. Dinner, a few precious hours with Kat, then home; sleep the sleep of the almost content.

A darting shape ahead, the black sedan pulling across the alley, blocking his exit. The driver's door flung open.

He dropped the bag and ran. Back towards Alberto's – no, couldn't risk everyone's safety. Past the kitchen and down the laneway. The glare of headlights behind him, coming closer. Fuck. Wouldn't make it. A walkway just ahead, too narrow for a car. Sprinting towards it, his shadow racing before him, breath rasping. Headlights bright, the car nearly on him.

And around the corner. Dark. Overhanging trees and sheer fences, concrete path just visible as he ran.

*Smack.*

DARKNESS FOR LIGHT

Reeling backwards, clutching his face.

A wire safety fence across the path, construction site beyond it. Fuck, have to climb. He hauled himself up, feet slipping as the fence swayed. Too slow, childhood meningitis stripping some balance along with his hearing.

Quick check behind him. A dim shape, someone running. Seven, eight metres away, something in their hand.

A weapon.

A gun.

Clawing up the fence, fingers gripping, pulling at the wire. Nearly at the top. Hands on the –

Slamming pain.

Skin, lungs, marrow fusing.

Down.