

Raised by Wolves Trapped by Demons Mimi Tallo Copyright © 2021 Independently Published

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This book could not be written without the emotional support from my psychologist Katie Skopp, the spiritual support from Rev. Taylor Stevens, or the loving support from my husband, Jerry Brier.

“Whenever something negative happens to you, there is a deep lesson concealed within it.” Eckhart Tolle
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Phoenix rising From the Ashes REFERENCES Foreword

This is my story about coming into the world feeling unloved and unwanted. Raised by an alcoholic father and a cold detached mother, I had to make my way in the world based solely on my instincts. My childhood would not include piano lessons, tap dancing and Girl Scouts. I would start working at nine years old. A good student and lover of literature, I aspired to be a teacher. That path was not made available to me. Instead, my parents expected me to remain at home and provide them with additional income. I felt trapped. My escape routes through the years included men, alcohol and drugs. A victim of

childhood abuse, sexual harassment and physical assault, I learned to accept the unacceptable in order to survive. A major pattern of self-destructive choices began to emerge. A significant portion of my life was spent uncovering, forgiving, and trying to resolve that pattern. I had decades to live before I would comprehend the predestination of my journey. Set against the background of Scranton Pennsylvania and West Palm Beach Florida, included are numerous historical facts about both areas. There are stories of the gangsters in our town, specifically soldiers connected to the Buffalino family. There are details about highly publicized murders, famous politicians and business kingpins. My story is told against the backdrop of the chauvinistic culture of that time. Revealing what it was like mistakenly thinking women might get ahead because of the Women's Liberation Movement. The reality of my world was sexual objectification and condescension.

After four decades of self-detrimental behavior, three divorces, psychoanalytic treatment, stopovers at inpatient facilities, counseling and 12 Step programs, I finally found a little happiness. What I didn't find was joy. Sobriety had revealed that I was still emotionally numb. The trauma of my life still lurked in the shadows of my psyche. Polish psychologist Dr. Kazimierz Dabrowski realized that the common nature / nurture debate was missing something. It had overlooked the role that we play in our own development. He called this 'The Third Factor.' The will to keep living life no matter what it might generate. The intention of writing the bare unadorned truth of my life is to be an example to women that are being abused in any way. I want to reveal to other marginalized women to never give up. My goal is to ignite the desire to live and grow in others. You can weather post-traumatic stress and psychological issues if you have the Third Factor.

"Life is inherently risky. There is only one big risk you should avoid at all costs, and that is the risk of doing nothing." Denis Waitley

Introduction

Human beings are meant to feel emotion. When that mechanism is short-circuited, first by emotionally neglectful parents and later continued by bad choices as an adult, it throws off the whole organism. Depression and anxiety are two of the most common causes of emotional numbness. Trauma and addiction were also on my personal hit parade. Many years of counseling, soul searching and gut-wrenching honesty have started to dissipate that numbness. I was able to break free from most of my demons. I no longer feel trapped. I now have many moments of happiness and a few glimpses of joy. Progress not perfection is my maxim. Preface

A major portion of my life has been spent uncovering, forgiving, and resolving my self destructive patterns. I wrote this book for the still marginalized women in this world. I have been a victim, a survivor and today an imperfect but integrated spiritual being. Putting on paper the bare unadorned truth of my life is both frightening and freeing.

Prologue

I guess you repeat some version of what you grew up with. My mother was cold, introverted and detached. I have no memories of her ever hugging or kissing any of us. My brother Joe said she would

tie him up in the basement and hit him with a hose. She told him her life would be much better if he had not been born. She would work all day in a factory and come home after my father had left for the night shift. It is a mystery to me how they found time to conceive four children. I neither have good or bad memories of my mother from when I was a child. I have read that a mother's role is that of a mirror, reflecting who the daughter is. A reflection of her strengths, talents, fears, and her hopes for the future. As a result of not looking into a maternal mirror, I grew up feeling unseen and misunderstood. I suffered from low self-esteem and a high degree of self-doubt. Plato uses the allegory of the cave as a way to discuss the deceptive appearances of things we see in the real world. He encourages people to instead focus on the abstract realm of ideas and dreams and not on the darkness. No matter how dark my life became, I just kept crawling toward the light. Unfortunately, some people never come out of the darkness of the cave. Chapter 1 Powerless

This wasn't my first time in a therapist office. I had been in therapy for marriage counseling and had dabbled with suicidal ideation. This was different. It was raining outside and a gloomy day, much like my mood. The office was on the 8th floor of the Mears building in downtown Scranton. I could hear the sounds of traffic from the street below. The office was very inviting with a big overstuffed chair and a couch with lots of pillows. A print of Degas' L'Etoile (The Star) hung on one wall. A lone ballerina on the stage, the stage lighting shining brilliantly onto her pose. A glance to the left and hiding behind the curtain, a foreboding, black figure standing calmly and watchfully. For all the joy the ballerina seemed to exude, a subtle reminder of the darkness in her reality. I was apprehensively waiting to see this psychologist. I was hoping he was not as gruff as the psychiatrist I had to see before I could start therapy. Dr. Boriosi was a well-respected psychiatrist in our area. His bedside manner, however, left something to be desired. I needed to see him for the meds I would need. Then the real work would start. Dr. Lemon entered the room and shut the door gently. We first made some small talk and then summarized my recent stay in Rehab. I had just been released from Marworth Treatment Center for addiction. The psychiatrist at the Rehab told me that I was dual diagnosed and cross-addicted. I guess that meant I can be addicted to anything, which is probably true. The official diagnosis was cross-addiction, chronic depression and anxiety disorder. It was revealed to me that the 20 years I spent in addiction, was a form of self-medication. Until the cure became worse than the illness, and I hit an emotional and spiritual bottom. Dr. Lemon listened very intently. His demeanor suggested he had a very loving, caring soul. He asked me to start with my earliest memory. I said I have many black holes in my memory. Dr. Lemon told me remembering is actually a spiritual experience. We are here on earth to remember our true identity. Memories may come back later or not at all. He said that is okay, just tell me what you can remember. What's your earliest memory? My earliest memory was when I was 5 years old and looking forward to kindergarten. Instead, I, with my brother, was dropped off at an orphanage. Dad took us to this big building with women that were dressed all in black with white around their faces. I later found out it was St. Joseph's Orphanage. Mother Crescentia, Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary had founded it in 1890. There was a growing problem of deserted children in the city of Scranton. Many fathers died in mine accidents and the widows could not take care of the children. There are not many details about the abandonment of these children. This IHM order immediately organized a home for abandoned children and adopted the name, St. Joseph's Society for Orphans. My mother was in the hospital giving birth to my brother Matt, the third sibling. I guess family relationships between us and our maternal grandmother were strained at the time. They felt they had no one to take care of us two, while she was in the hospital. My mother had four sisters who she

could have called on to help. Now I know it sounds strange. It's always seemed strange to me. Can you imagine at 5 years old, being left at an orphanage? My father left us with the nuns and said he'd be back in a little bit. Ironically, this was the same orphanage that my father lived in for the first four years of his life. It was really disconcerting when the nuns told us our clothes were too nice compared to the other children. They took our clothes and gave us old tattered clothing. I remember well, because they were scratchy, probably wool. They told us the boys and girls must be separate. They took my brother away. I remember that night sleeping in a bunk bed with another little girl. In the morning we lined up to use the bathroom. Breakfast was thin, watery oatmeal and lunch was a soft-boiled egg and toast. Then we were herded out to the playground. I saw my brother Joe. He ran to me and hugged me so hard, I almost fell to the ground. The next day my father came to visit us. He brought us each a Hershey bar. The nun took them and said we could have them after dinner. We never saw a piece of those candy bars. Although it felt like an eternity, my parents allege it was only 5 days. For some unknown reason they also decided that I should not go to kindergarten. Whenever I see the poster "All you need to know you learned in kindergarten", I get pissed. I don't remember much of my childhood years after that. I do remember walking home from school with my brother Joe. There was a crossing guard we called Joe the cop, even though he wasn't a cop. He seemed to like us more than the other kids. Anyway, I vaguely remember him inviting us to stop by his house one day after school. We did and he gave us candy. That's all I remember, it seems inconsequential. A few days later he came to our house. He was drunk. He knocked on the door. Told my father that he had a beautiful daughter and that he better take care of her. I remember my father getting very angry and that was it. That's all I remember. At that point in my story, I shrugged my shoulders and let out a sigh. Dr. Lemon took that moment to tell me there was such a thing as disassociated amnesia. Sometimes you have things in your life that you don't want to remember. The brain can just put them in cold storage. "That makes sense" I remarked. Dr. Lemon told me to please continue. Joe and I used to walk home every day from school on Pittston Ave, the main thoroughfare through Southside. We walked the last two blocks to our house alongside Pittston Avenue Cemetery. It was the German Presbyterian Church Cemetery. It had a wall that we would climb up and then walk on top of the wall. At the end of that corner was Brook Street and it was very steep. At the bottom was a creek. Brooks are typically smaller and shallower than creeks. This was a wide and deep body of water, definitely not a brook. I guess "Brook" just sounded nicer. Behind that creek was a wooded area that we called Cow Hill. Joe and I used to love playing on Cow Hill. We built forts and hideaways. We also would like to play in the alleys behind our homes with other neighborhood kids. You mostly stuck to your own block. My house was on Pittston Ave and it was bordered by Brook and Cherry Street and then the bottom street was Cedar Avenue. My brother and I could do anything if we stayed on the block. The weekends in my house were especially nightmarish. On Fridays when we reached home after school, we held our breath and opened the front door. If my father had a glass of beer in front of him, we knew it was going to be hell for the weekend. If there wasn't a glass of beer, we both let out a sigh of relief. My father was a binge drinker. Monday through Friday he would work the night shift at the Capitol Records Factory. Some weekends he would cut grass for people to make extra money. If there was a weekend when there was no grass to cut, then he would prefer to drink. He was jovial for the first couple of hours, but then came the witching hour we all dreaded. We would lay in our beds and wait to see whose name would be called. Usually, he would start with my mother. We would hear them at the kitchen table, mostly hearing my father shouting and pounding the table. Then he would call one of two names. He would either call Marie or Joe. If he called Joe, it was a shorter ordeal, but a horrible hell. At some point I would hear him take off his belt. He would beat my brother and then send

him back to bed. If he called Marie, it was a seemingly never-ending hell. He would talk endlessly about his childhood, how he had been wronged and humiliated by his family. After an hour or so, he would look at me and say "If looks could kill I would be dead. There is such hate coming from your eyes". He eventually would fall asleep and I would scurry off to bed. Dr. Lemon asked, "How did all this make you feel when you were a child. Did you think it was normal behavior?" I told him what my parents told me "What happens in your house stays in your house". I never even thought about telling a teacher or a priest. He asked me again, how did that make you feel? I felt powerless.

Chapter 2 Chinese Fire Drills

Driving home from Doctor Lemon's office, I started to think about my father's childhood. His father had immigrated from Ribera Sicily. Ribera is a small community near Palermo. It was founded in 1630 by Prince Luigi Mogdano and named Ribera, his wife's surname. My Grandfather Giuseppe Tallo was born in Ribera in 1888. I was told that side of my family has been around since the time of Julius Caesar. The family historian and scholar, also named Matteo, traced us back to a Tallo that was one of Julius Caesar's secretaries. No one before my grandfather or since has immigrated to the United States from Sicily. He seems to have been the only malcontent. The Tallos that stayed in Sicily did very well. My Grandfather migrated to the United States in 1920. He started a dry goods company. He went door to door delivering linens. He made quite a good living. Almost immediately after establishing himself, he married a woman named Petrina Polizzi. She was from a respected family from South Scranton. They bought a house on Pittston Avenue. After a few years of marriage, he realized his wife was not giving him an heir. I don't know if it was frustration or male ego, but the story was he started having an affair. It was rumored to be with an Irish woman from Minooka. Unfortunately for her, she did become pregnant. At that time one of the only solutions was to put the child in an orphanage, Saint Joseph's orphanage in this case. It would have been a great scandal to keep the baby. First, because the father was an Italian and secondly because he was married. She later married a doctor and had two children. As my father tells the story, when he was four years old, his father then adopted him as his own. He named him Matteo and brought him home to his wife Petrina. She was not too happy. In one of my father's drunken monologues, he told me how verbally abusive she was. He was taught Italian by his father and spoke it fluently. One of the things she would say often was, " andare a puttana chi ti ha cagato". Remember, he knew Italian and the Sicilian dialect. He understood she was telling him to go back to the person that had birthed him, complete with profanities and intensity. My grandmother Petrina died in 1954. Although, I don't remember her, I find it curious that she also was not an alternative to our stay at St. Josephs in 1953. Scranton was a big industrial booming metropolis at one time. Dad would tell us how he went to work in the mines when he was 8 years old. He was a canary boy. They used canaries in coal mines to detect carbon monoxide and other toxic gases before they went into the mines. If the canary became ill or died, that would give miners a warning not to enter or to evacuate if they were already inside. They also used children to go in first and open the trap doors that let in air. That's why they were called the Canary boys. When Dad got a little older, he made a shoeshine box. He would visit saloons and ask if anyone wanted a shoeshine. At sixteen, he started working at the Gold Star Pants factory and that's where he met my mother, Antonette. He joined the U.S. Navy, but received a compassionate discharge after nine months citing family illness. He and my mother married in January 1948. Lucky for him a new factory, Capitol Records pressing plant hired him. He worked nights starting at 3:30 PM. My mother worked days until 4:30 PM and got home before 5. From age 10, I was the babysitter between 3 and 5

PM. I oversaw my younger siblings. By then there was baby Ann, Matt 5 years old and Joe 9 years old. My father was the daytime parent. If there was an emergency with one of us that's who would come. I was about 7 years old and my brother Joe 8. We were playing 'Tag' at recess in the James Monroe Elementary School yard. I am sure it was an accident, but Joe tripped me and I hit my head on the concrete wall right by my left eyebrow. I was bleeding profusely. When my father got there, he scooped me up and carried me to our family Doctor, Dr. Spaletta. The office was about 2 blocks away. The doctor stitched me up right there. I have a small scar at the edge of my left eyebrow. That scar reminds me that my father could be a caring parent. For some reason my father would not let us get a dog. My brother Joe would beg and promise to take care of it to no avail. My father liked uncommon and exotic pets. We had goats and chickens in our garage. The goats did not like my brother Matthew. They would take every opportunity to butt him when he was playing in the yard. I learned how to milk a goat but I would not drink the goat's milk. My father brought home a male Capuchin monkey and named him George. These are the little ones you see on the organ grinder's shoulder. Due to their energetic nature, they require an active lifestyle. George would be in his cage for hours at a time. My brothers hated him and teased him when my dad was not around. George got angry quickly and could hold a grudge. When he would be let out of the cage, he would be aggressive. He would go straight for Joe and Matt and they would run. I tried to stay in my room when he was let out of the cage. He would climb the drapes and relieve himself at will. George bit my father at least five times. Finally, my father donated him to the Nay Aug Park Zoo. We were not sorry to see him go. When Joe was about 10, he found and brought home a miniature collie. We named her Lucky. At first it seemed that my father was ok with the dog. One day he abruptly gave Lucky away to our neighbor. Unfortunately these neighbors mistreated her. After a few weeks, Lucky disappeared from our neighbors porch. We had no clue what happened to her. It was heartbreaking. Two years later, Joe and I were playing a game in the basement and we heard scratching at the back door. When we investigated, there was Lucky. If dogs could talk, she would have quite a story. Even my father was blown away at Lucky's baffling homecoming. We kept her until she died six years later. When I was about 15, I remember the morning he came home from working the night shift at Capitol and gave me a 45-rpm vinyl record of "I Want to Hold Your Hand" by the Beatles. That was one of very few fond memories of my chaotic childhood. I don't know when it started, but we were made to endure "Chinese Fire Drills" quite often. "Chinese fire drill" is a slang term for a situation that is chaotic or confusing, possibly due to poor or misunderstood instructions. Today, this term is considered offensive. Hours after we fell asleep, we would awaken to our father screaming our names. Rubbing the sleep from our eyes, we would stumble down the stairs. He would have us line up and begin the interrogation. It might be about something he found broken or missing. He would berate us until one of us broke. I suspect my brother Joe confessed even when innocent just to stop the interrogation. My parents were very strict. A decision I found unreasonable had to do with the Catholic Daughters at my church. As I said school, the library and the church were my safe havens. Catholic Daughters was the alternative version to the {Protestant} Girl Scouts. I loved being part of a group. We put on musicals and minstrel shows for the congregation. The minstrel show portrayed the Interlocutors as black men. Two older girls in blackface. I had no idea at the time how racist this was. Every summer the Catholic Daughters of St Johns Church held a sleepover camp. It was held at The Little Flower Camp in Tobyhanna, near the Poconos. I begged and begged to go with my peers to no avail. I was not ever allowed to do sleepovers at any of my friends' homes. Finally, when I was 15, they let me stay at my friend Paula's house. She was Italian and Catholic so she passed the test. I didn't tell them her parents were gone away. Paula didn't tell me that her boyfriend Slick was staying over. That night I "heard"

them having sex. I laid in the bed in the next room auditing Sex Education 101. My father had to meet every boy I went out with. That was a challenging situation. Not just for the boys, but for the embarrassment it brought me. At that time, the early sixties, there were dances held every Friday. Community approved places to stay out of trouble. Mechanics Hall, Workingman's Hall, St. Mary's, etc. Usually just playing popular records. Sometimes there was a live band. One of my nightmare memories was when I needed a boy to meet my dad before we could go to the dance. At the time my father was making his own beer, we had a bathroom on first floor and one on the second floor. He took over the claw foot bathtub on the second floor for his brewery. The first time I had a date with a boy, my father insisted on showing him the two dozen bottles of beer fermenting in the tub upstairs. After that I would just say I was going to one of the dances with my girlfriends.

" A happy childhood is the worst possible preparation for life." Kinky Friedman

Chapter 3 Mustard Baths

In my next session with Dr. Lemon, he addressed that I had said very little about my mother. I didn't realize that so I proceeded to tell him about my mother's background. My mother's parents came from the area of Bari in Italy. I was able to visit there later in my life. The town was called Alberobello, beautiful trees in English. Her father Dominic was 15 years older than her mother Anna. He literally picked my grandmother like a flower from a garden. Of the two daughters of the Galiani family, my grandmother was the prettiest. Dominic Copertino opened a bar and the family lived upstairs. My mother was first born like me and named Vita Antonia. For some unknown reason, they later changed her name to Antonette. They were not affectionate to their children or each other. My grandfather told my mother she should become a nun because she was not pretty enough to attract a husband. I guess you repeat some version of what you grew up with. My mother was cold, introverted and detached. I have no memories of her ever hugging or kissing any of us. My brother Joe said she would tie him up in the basement and hit him with a garden hose. She told him her life would be much better if he had not been born. She would work all day in the Gold Star Pants factory and come home after my father had left for the night shift at Capitol Records. It is a mystery to me how they found time to conceive four children. I neither have good or bad memories of my mother from when I was a child. I have read that a mother's role is that of a mirror, reflecting who the daughter is. Her strengths, talents, fears, and her hopes for the future. As a result of not having a maternal mirror, I grew up feeling unseen and misunderstood. I suffered from low self-esteem and a high degree of self-doubt. I learned housekeeping skills from my father. He was the one who taught me how to fold laundry, make a bed with hospital corners and cook. He was the one that helped me with homework when I was in elementary school. He was the one that handled all my medical emergencies. Maybe that is another reason why I never developed a bond with my mother. Later in life I had to place my mother in a nursing home. I picked what I thought was the best one in the area, The Jewish Home. I had worked there when I was in high school. I knew it was clean, the food was good and they took good care of their patients. My mother was very angry at me for placing her there. However, she could not take care of herself or her apartment. She was becoming a hoarder and keeping old newspapers and junk mail in trash bags. She was also a compulsive shopper and ordering daily from QVC. Her sister Jane was in the same facility so that made it a little more agreeable. I was living in Florida at the time, so I got her a cell phone. When I brought her the cell phone, she said, "Why are you so nice to me?" I replied:" Because

you're my mother." I also gave her a journal called: "Mom, Tell Me Your Story, a guided journal". I thought that would be a nice thing for me to have after she died. After she passed, I took the little book back to Florida with me. She didn't have entries under many of the sections, but there was one entry that clearly explained our lack of a bond. Under the heading, "Starting A Family: How did you feel when you found out you were going to be a mom?" She wrote " When I realized I was pregnant, I jumped up and down the hallway steps multiple times, and took mustard baths every day to end it. But it didn't work".

Love the heart that hurts you,

but never hurt the heart that loves you.

- Vipin Sharma Chapter 4 Child Labor

Scranton was a big drinking town. During the coal boom in the 1800's Anthracite was first quarried from outcrops. When quarrying became impractical, the miners went underground. The coal miners would work a 12-hour day. Covered in soot they would stop at the bar before they went home. Drinking had been just what the hardworking men did. Work hard drink hard! There was a bar on every corner. They would drink in their neighborhood bar and then stumble home. No fear of a DUI, then. Even after the mines closed that mentality continued in our valley. There were only two kinds of drinkers in my hometown. Those that were in the bar drinking and those that were in AA meetings. The popular opinion was that the drunks in AA couldn't hold their liquor. Getting drunk wasn't seen as a bad thing. However, public drunkenness was frowned upon. It was acting drunk that brought shame. I had an alcoholic father that often embarrassed me in front of my friends and was the bane of my life. When I was about 15, a roller-skating rink opened called Town Hall. My friends and I were so excited. I didn't even know how to roller skate, but I learned fast. After all, that's where the boys were. We would all skate round and round the rink in a circle. The hardest part to learn was how to make the turns. Popular music of the day was played such as The Beachboys, Leslie Gore, Dion, etc. One Saturday I was skating and trying not to let the boys see me looking at them. Out of the corner of my eye who did I see but my father. Of course, he was drunk. I watched with horror as he rented a pair of skates. He got into the rink and he started to skate. I pretended I didn't know who he was. He didn't get very far before he crashed into the guardrails and fell. He couldn't get up. People came over to help him and they had to call an ambulance. It turns out he broke his wrist. I was happy that happened. He didn't come back again. The Gods had let me keep at least one place of my own. Here I was with a drunken father, who made beer in the bathtub and it seemed like there was no escape from this hell. My dream was to be a High School English teacher. I was a voracious reader. I had a branch of the public library right across the

street and our church a block away. These were very good places for me to escape to. They were places that my parents could not declare off limits. I would go to that library and check out a bunch of books. Run upstairs to my room. Put the Platters or Temptations on the record player and I'd be up there for hours. One time my father came to the door and said I was spending too much time in my room and demanded I come down with the rest of the family. So, I started going downstairs and watching TV at night with the family. I loved school and I was so blessed to have had a wonderful English teacher in seventh grade. Mrs. Wilder would not only tell you about the book, she would act it out. Then she would assign parts to some of us in class and do a little play. I fell in love with her. She stoked the fire of my love of reading. She had talked about a book called "Gone with the Wind." I wanted to get that book as soon as I got home from school that day. The library had a children's section and an adult section. I was only 14 or 15th time. This book was in the adult section and the librarian would not let me check it out. So back across the street I went and asked my mother to please check this book out for me. I told her the teacher told me to read it. My mother did go over and checked it out. When first published, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* was banned on social grounds. The book had been called "offensive" and "vulgar" because of the language and characterizations. Words like "damn" and "whore" were scandalous at the time. The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice disapproved of Scarlett's multiple marriages. The term used to describe slaves was also offensive to some readers. In time the membership of the lead characters in the Ku Klux Klan became problematic. Being a teenager, I was more focused on the love triangle. I was an A student and my love of reading had me placed in an AP English class. I still had the dream of going to college. My parents instilled in me and my brother Joe that we had to work to get things that were not necessities. We had jobs after school from about 9 to 10 years of age. As a teenager, I had to pay for the dentist and buy my own clothes. I cleaned Mrs. Frank's 5 & 10 store and walked down the hill every night to pick up her dinner at Smith's Restaurant. Joe shined shoes in bars at night and did other odd jobs. When I was almost 16 and Joe 15, we both got jobs working at a bakery for Sam Miller. Five days a week after school. My job was wrapping the bread and other baked goods. There was a hot griddle type plate. I would wrap the cellophane around the product and then place it momentarily on the hot griddle to seal it. I got quite a few burns. My brother helped the bakers. Getting supplies out of the storage room etc. One of the bakers was a stunning man named Steve Mellin. He was in his late twenties, was married and had children. He flirted with me all the time. I loved the attention. I still had not learned to drive. That was the ruse that got me to be alone with him. Steve offered to help me learn, I still had homework waiting at home, but I would go with him for a short while. He would find a deserted lot or sometimes drive to Nay Aug Park. The driving lessons turned out to be make out sessions. I had never kissed a man before, just boys. There was no comparison. After a few weeks, he started to tell me he was in love with me. He wanted us to run away together. I was torn between the headrush of this man telling me he loved me and my Catholic upbringing. So, I did what any good Catholic girl would do. I went to confession. I told the priest I was having an affair with a married man. He told me to put myself in the wife's shoes. As soon as he said that, I knew what I had to do. The next night when I went for "my driving lesson", I broke it off with Steve. The ironic part was that my brother Joe had followed us that night. He saw me with Steve. My brother had me on a pedestal since the bond we formed in the orphanage. That night, I fell off that pedestal. At home, he confronted me and told me how disappointed he was in me. I was no longer the saint, he thought I was. For years I romanticized that fling with Steve. Finally, I realized that legally he would be labeled a pedophile. The priest never mentioned that the actions of this married 25-year-old man were sinful and inappropriate. No, he put the blame and shame on me. I will not judge Steve for the short-lived affair. But I have

changed the lens through which I see this experience. I no longer perceive it as a May-December romance. I now see it for what it was. An adult man preying on a naive girl.

The universe gives us unlimited opportunities and unlimited messengers. There was a pattern emerging. A pattern I wouldn't see for many years. Chapter 5 Innocence Lost

In 1965 Inspired by John Kennedy, James Walsh ran for mayor of Scranton, challenging the Democratic Party structure and the party's endorsed candidate, Jim McGee. I was asked to be a "Walsh Girl". A group of young girls that would go to rallies and ride in convertibles in parades. I was just 16. We had red and white outfits with capes. Basically, eye candy. One night at a rally, one of the older guys working for the candidate asked me to help him. We were at the Hotel Casey. He took me upstairs to one of the suites to get more beverages for the party downstairs. I should have realized something was wrong, when he didn't turn on the lights. Before I knew it, he picked me up and started to carry me towards the bed. I was able to get away and ran downstairs. Marty was about 30 years old. I was more aware of my surroundings after that. Sexual inappropriateness was not really addressed then. I felt ashamed. I never told anyone. I was starting to realize that men like that are attracted to girls who they think are easy to manipulate and control. My senior year I was looking forward to going to college. In 1966 we had two big colleges in Scranton. Marywood College, which was for girls and the University of Scranton which was for boys. I graduated in a high school class of 500 students. We had a huge senior class. The Scranton Central High School was a college prep school. Most students were planning on going to college. After the graduation ceremony my parents gave me a watch as a graduation present. Then they informed me that they would not be able to support me going to college. Their belief was that the college was wasted on girls because ultimately, they were going to get married and have children. They said I needed to stay home and get a job and help the family. I was crushed. I was 17 years old and my brain and my temperament, personality and resourcefulness was not adequate enough to defend my dream. I did not have the courage or capability to figure out a way to go anyway without their permission. It seemed like an insurmountable problem. I was dating a boy that was a year younger than me at the time. I had met him at a dance and he did not go to our school so I didn't know how old he was when I met him. Curt was a sweetheart. He really fell head over heels in love with me. I started dating him in March. By June my feelings had simmered down. However, I needed a date for the prom. I wasn't going to break up with him until after my Senior Prom. I went to the prom with the explicit plan of losing my virginity that night. I wore this full-length dress with a yellow bodice and enormous skirt embroidered with daisies. In spite of the size of the dress, I fulfilled my mission. In the back seat of his 1964 Mustang. Oh, the flexibility of youth. That summer Curt became an annoyance. I just didn't care for him and it got so bad that when he kissed me, I would literally want to throw up. By Midsummer I had broken it off with Curt. He was very upset about it. One night I was coming home from a dance and he was literally waiting for me in the dark. He scared the shit out of me. He got on his knees and begged for me to take him back. I can't believe I did this but I actually said "You are not much of a man if you're on your knees. " I went to a dance a couple weeks later at Workingman's Hall. During intermission this gorgeous blonde boy walked up to me. He looked like James Caan in the 60's. The way Caan looked in the movie "The Godfather" in the role of Sonny Corleone. Curly blonde hair and green eyes. Just as in "The Godfather", I was "Colpo di fulmine". The thunderbolt, as Italians call it. When love strikes someone like lightning, so powerful and intense it can't be denied. We started talking and he told me he

was leaving to go in the Navy the next day. He asked if I would write to him. Of course, I said yes... he wrote down his military address on a matchbook cover and I promised I would write to him. That promise changed my life in ways I could not imagine. Chapter 6 Capitol Girls

After graduation, mother got me a job at the Gold Star pants factory with her. That was the worst summer of my life. I had two Italian ladies, one on each side of me. They would talk all day, telling dirty jokes and using filthy language. My face would just be red the whole day. One of them, Sofia, said to me, "honey, you don't belong here, you belong in an office". By the end of the summer, I did find a job in an office, Capitol Records. Not the plant where my father worked, but the record club company. Back then companies like Columbia Records and Capitol Records had subscription clubs. The customer would sign up and every month he would get the record of the month. My position there was in customer service. I loved my job. At Capitol Records I met people that I would be friends with for decades, Janet, Pat, Priscilla, Annmarie and Marlene. We were all young, dating and looking forward to getting married someday and having children. We would get together once a week, alternating at each other's homes. We shared everything, our joys, and our heartbreaks. Janet first had her heart broken by a handsome Italian attorney she was dating. Then she met a State Trooper that is still her husband today. They have been married for probably 50 years or more. Priscilla was our favorite. We loved her so much. She was very funny and so beautiful. She looked like Elizabeth Taylor but with blonde hair. She was very self-conscious about her weight even though none of us cared about her size. She was crazy about this guy, who worked for the Scranton Times. He was a very passive guy, but for some reason his nickname was Killer. She practically stalked him. He finally had to give in and they got married. They had two children, Dayna, and Bryan. Marlene married Dave and they had many happy years together. Unfortunately, like many of us that marry too young, they grew apart and got divorced. Annmarie was going with a very good-looking Italian boy from Old Forge. They seemed very much in love. They got married young and had a son. However, it turned out her husband was not capable of fidelity. She got divorced and never remarried. Pat was in love with a man who owned a million-dollar business and was very well known. They went out for years, however he was not interested in marriage. He broke her heart. To this day she has never married. I worked at Capitol records for a couple years and I met some famous people. One day The Righteous Brothers came in, Bobby Hatfield and Bill Medley. I remember noting that Bobby was very nice and friendly. However, Bill Medley was a little bit of a snob and uppity. Then we got the news that Capitol was closing the record club division in Scranton. They were building a beautiful new building in Los Angeles. They asked the top employees; the most productive people go to Los Angeles and train people. I thought this was it. This is my escape. The company was going to pay for my plane ticket. They had a building with apartments for just the Capitol employees. My friend Marlene was going to go. This was great because I would not have to be alone in a strange city. I went home so excited that night and told my parents all about it. My father started to yell at me. "He said if you try to leave and go to California I will jump in front of the airplane." There's no way he was going to let me leave. When I look back on it, I think why didn't I pack secretly and run away in the middle of the night. I could have stayed at my friend Marlene's house. I could have boarded the plane the next day. I guess my training had always been to be meek and subservient to adults. My self-confidence was too fragile to stand up for myself. Another getaway plan thwarted! Chapter 7 Soldier Boys

It was 1967 the Vietnam War was still going on. I knew a lot boys that had been drafted. I was writing Jack Calvey who had joined the Navy. It was the judge's idea not his. At that time, when young men

were arrested for non-felonies, the judge would give them a choice. Jail or the Military. Most of them chose the military. That winter of 67, we had more than the usual amount of snow. This particular day I was shoveling the front sidewalk. A boy I never saw before came up to me, grabbed the extra shovel that was leaning against the fence and started shoveling. I asked him why he was doing that. He said, "You look like you could use some help, cutie". That's how I met Jimmy Carr. It's interesting that like my random meeting with Jack Calvey, he was also leaving the next day for the military, the Marines. When we shoveled the front sidewalk, he also asked me to write to him. I said I would. I guess this was my way of contributing to the war effort, writing to these guys. The thing about writing to servicemen, especially during wartime, it can get intimate quickly. That's what had already happened with Jack. I was on the bus one day going downtown and I saw a few girls that I knew from high school. I told them about Jack and that I was writing to him. One of the girls told me you're not the only one. It seems he had been writing to a few girls. One of the girls I knew very well. Her name was Betty. I called her and asked "are you writing Jack?" She said "yes, I am". I made a date to meet with her. We both brought our letters. The son of a bitch was practically writing the same thing to both of us. I continued to write to Jack, but I let him know that I knew about the other girls. I realized he wasn't as committed as I was. So, I started dating and going out with my friends. After a few months, I found myself getting enamored with both Jimmy and Jack. These boys were poles apart. Jimmy went to Vietnam. Jack ended up in Iceland. The songs from that time were about soldiers away at war. There was a song called Jimmy Mack. "Oh, Jimmy Mack when are you comin' back Oh, Jimmy Mack when are you comin' back My arms are missing you, My lips feel the same way too I tried so hard to be true, like I promised to do But this guy keeps comin' around He's tryin' to wear my resistance down "Jimmy Mack when are you coming back

There were also a lot of serious songs, protest songs about the Vietnam War and the toll it was having on our soldiers. The Unknown Soldier was written and recorded by The Doors and released in early 1968. It recalls the death of a faceless soldier in combat, while life goes on at home ("news is read" and "children fed"). When Jimmy came back from Vietnam, he came to see me at my house late at night. He looked very gaunt and sad. Gone was the sparkling personality of the boy who shoveled my sidewalk. We talked. He told me how much my letters meant to him. He said they were the only thing that kept him going. We made out some, second base. I gave him an 8 x 10 picture of me. He left that night and I never saw him again. About two weeks after that, his obituary was in the Scranton Times newspaper. He apparently had committed suicide. I was stunned and devastated to my core. While the majority of Vietnam Veterans successfully readjusted to postwar life, a substantial number of Vietnam-era Veterans had suffered from a variety of psychological problems, and had experienced a wide range of life-adjustment problems. Who knows what horrors Jimmy C. saw over there? Chapter 8 Jeopardy

One night I went to a bar downtown with my friend Arlene. Neither one of us was 21. But we both had a fake ID. I still remember my fake name. It was Beverly Colangelo and she was 28. I looked about 15. We went to this place called the Cheetah lounge. The doorman barely glanced at my fake ID. I had one drink. I wasn't a drinker back then. Around midnight Arlene and I left and began to walk home. It was very common at that time to walk everywhere. A boy I knew named Billy Cerra asked if he could walk us home. I said we're good, we don't need you to do that. I knew he had gone on a few dates with another friend of mine, Carol. But I didn't know him well. He was from the other side of town. He insisted that he walk us home. We got to Arlene's house first. I said Goodnight to her. My house was maybe four more blocks. When we got to Brook Street, which was a very steep hill, he said, "Oh, let's run down this hill. It will be fun." He grabbed my hand and next thing I knew we're running down the hill. You can't

stop running once you start, it's just that steep of a hill. He held my hand tightly. When we got to the end of the hill, there was an alley that went behind my house. I'm not going to go back up that steep hill, so we turned into the alley. As soon as we entered that alley, he punched me in the face. There were rocks on the ground. He picked one up and held it over my head. He said scream and I will kill you. I have never been so terrified in my life. Somehow, I had the presence of mind to say, "My Dad's garage is right in the middle of the alley. Why don't we just go inside the garage instead of doing this outside"? He pulled me up and we began to walk towards my garage. He still had the rock in his hand. Suddenly he stopped and said, "You are trying to trick me." My basic instincts just took over. Suddenly everything went black and I was screaming. It just occurred organically. I didn't tell myself to scream. I just started to scream. The neighbors put their heads out the window and two of them came outside. These two men started to chase him. Unfortunately, they did not catch him. Mercifully, I was not raped. It still was a very traumatic night. My father insisted that I call the police. I didn't want to. I was pushed to go through the whole process. The nightmare of testifying to the grand jury. It didn't even make it to court. I had two witnesses that saw him running away but they couldn't be sure who he was. Even though I knew his name. He denied it was him. Years later I ran into him in The Globe Department Store. He walked up to me as if we were buddies and he said hello. I said "Don't you know who I am?" You could see the light come into his eyes as he remembered. I guess I was one of many. Since I was in his presence, I decided to ask him how did he get away with it. He looked at me and said, very matter of fact, "Well, it cost my parents a lot of money." I took that to mean that somebody got bought off. I guess the DA. Later, Karma got him because he got arrested several times for rape and attempted rape. Although they never seemed to be able to convict him of rape charges. Eventually he was convicted of robbery and sent to jail for few years. The rape attempt was very traumatic. I spent days in bed incredibly depressed. Jack's mother came to see me and gave me a pep talk. She motivated me to get out of bed and on with my life. Around the same time my father and my brother Joe went to Reedman's in Lancaster to buy a new car. They came home with a 1969 Black Thunderbird. As soon as my mother saw it, she pulled my father aside. She told him that this was not an appropriate car for our family. I offered to buy it from my dad. He agreed to let me give him monthly payments. That car really cheered me up and it attracted the boys. I couldn't wait till that Friday to drive to Papa Joes in Archibald. Of course, the boys all went crazy. They asked me to take them for a ride. When we got on Route 81, I sped up. I don't know what got into me, but I started to go faster and faster. When I finally looked at the speedometer, it read 100 mph. Looking back, I think it made me feel powerful, a feeling I had never experienced before.

A few days later, my father took the Thunderbird to run some errands. When he returned, he told me our deal was off. That car was too fast for a young girl like me, I was furious at the time. Now I thank God because I know he was right.

"She'll have fun, fun, fun until Daddy takes the T-Bird away" The Beachboys

Chapter 9 The Great Escape

Jack came to see me when he was on leave. He seemed devastated that I had gone through such trauma. He felt bad that he wasn't there for me. He was so charming and the chemistry was off the charts. After he returned to the ship we continued to write. The letters got steamy. When he got discharged from the Navy, he called me. We went to the movies and had a nice evening. On the way home there was this telephone pole with a wooden box on the side. Who knows why that box was

there? Jack turned into an opportunity for a very romantic moment. He turned over that crate and picked me up and put me on top of it. It was as if he was putting me on a pedestal. He looked at me with those beautiful green eyes and proposed. So here I was offered another escape route. I did love him. I was very into him, but if I had a nicer home environment, I probably would have waited a little longer to get married. The next night he insisted on asking my father for my hand in marriage. My father was drinking and did not take the proposal well. First, he took me in another room and proceeded to tell me that Jack just wanted to get in my pants. After an unbelievably long time with him postulating on the devious ways of young men, he gave up that line of attack. He realized he just wasn't going to sway me. He then proceeded to take Jack down into the basement to talk to him. Later, Jack told me that my father said I didn't love him and the only reason I said yes was, so I could get out of my house and be free from my family. There was more than a grain of truth in that. At this point Jack had enough. He went to the front door, looked at me sadly and left. I looked at my mother. There was nothing in her eyes to influence me. I picked up my purse and I went out the door. That night I stayed at my grandmother's. I did not return home. Jack and I were married a few weeks later. At that time, you had to be 21 to get married. You had to be 21 to vote and to drink. I was 19 and going to be 20 in a month. I had to ask my mother to sign for me at the courthouse for the marriage license. She did. We had a church wedding in the church I grew up in, St. John's the Evangelist. My parents had a small party at the house. I still have a few pictures of the day. I looked happy and Jack looked confused. They say you marry your father. He was just a younger cuter version of my father. I went from the frying pan into the fire. At first, we had our honeymoon period and everything seemed wonderful. After a few weeks I started noticing things. The fact that he hadn't gotten a job. He wanted to be with me all the time. I had gotten a great job at Aetna insurance as an underwriter. He hated when I left for work, but someone had to pay the bills.

Chapter 10 Caged Bird

One night we had my cousin Annamae came over for dinner. He invited his cousin Larry. I guess we were doing a little matchmaking. There was some drinking after dinner. Jack put romantic music on our record player. Larry began to kiss Annamae. At some point the inference was made that we should switch. My cousin walked out of our apartment in a huff. I too was very upset so I don't blame her. I told Larry to go home and had a terrible blow up with Jack. I didn't understand how after three months of marriage he thought we should get into swinging or kinky stuff like that. I wanted to believe he was my soulmate in all areas. However, there was a pattern emerging. One which would take me decades to realize. In looking for freedom, I had walked into a physical, sexual, and emotional prison. I had married Jack in 1968. The character defects I had avoided looking at before started to emerge. He would get drunk every weekend. He could not seem to find a job. He was very controlling and possessive. Very early into the marriage, I suspected he was fooling around. He would talk me into taking the day off from work to be with him. I was young and naïve. I did not realize that after a certain amount of "sick days", I could be fired. I got called into the office one day and told I had taken more than four sick days in the last two months. I was fired. I was so upset. I loved that job. Jack was trying to get help from the V.A. to pursue a career in drafting. Meanwhile, he was not bringing any money into the household. He just sat around and drank. I had to go back to work at the dreaded Gold Star factory. This was the first apartment for both of us and the first time we lived apart from any authority but ourselves. We had a skylight in the living room ceiling and I would love it when it rained. I would lie on the floor looking up at the rain filled sky. Imagining I was a bird flying above the clouds, free. It was a small apartment, but

charming. Our landlord, however, was crazy. I was running a bath one day and he came up the stairs, went into the bathroom and shut off the water. He told me I was using too much water. Jack almost threw him down the stairs. Not long after that, Jack was drunk and arguing with the landlord about something. This time he put his fist through the front door glass. That was the first time we had to move. I thought "OK" we will just treat this as a fresh start. We moved into a first-floor apartment over a bar. The bar Morgan's was in the basement. I wasn't allowed to go into a bar without Jack. One day I decided to go down to pay the rent. I came out of the basement bar and started to go into our apartment. Jack was pulling up at the same moment. He started screaming and pulling my hair. I was determined not to have him get me inside the house. I held onto the railing for dear life. Finally, the police came and told him to cool off, take it easy. We had to move again. My mother had a friend who had a second-floor apartment. She lived downstairs and we lived upstairs. She heard all the noise and fights and everything that went on. Of course, she reported it all to my mom. My brother Joe was getting married. The family was having a bridal shower for his fiancé Barb. She was picking me up in her car. Jack did not want me to go. He never wanted me to be around family or friends. I knew it wasn't normal but I didn't realize how abusive it was. I was young and unsophisticated. That day I realized how abusive he could be. When Barbara beeped the horn, I was unable to come out of the apartment. He literally had tied me to the kitchen chair. He told her I was tied up and couldn't attend the shower. If that was his attempt at humor, it was very sick humor. He then untied me and was lovey dovey the rest of the day. After that it got even worse. He never hit me, hair pulling and pinching were his forte. A month of abuse went by before I fled to my parents' home. After I left, he sold all of our furniture and all our belongings. In those days' girls started a Hope Chest before they got married. I had saved green stamps for years to collect a full set of beautiful silver and white china. Some of you might not know what green stamps are. Green Stamps were one of the first retail loyalty programs, by which retailers purchased the stamps from the Sperry & Hutchinson company and then gave them away at a rate determined by the merchant. Some shoppers would choose one merchant over another because they gave out more stamps per dollar spent. Certain grocery stores, gas stations and department stores gave you stamps when you bought things and you saved them in a book. When you had enough books, you could redeem them for merchandise. I had acquired enough books for a beautiful silver and white china set. He sold the dishes that I had saved up for so long. Jack knew how special that set of china was. He knew how upset I was that it was gone. Yet he kept pursuing me and asking me for forgiveness. His charming ways, his handsome face, the chemistry, everything finally wore me down. I forgave him and believed his promise to never mistreat me again. We now had literally nothing and so moved into a furnished apartment. He started taking drafting courses under the VA program. He was still drinking and verbally abusing me. Then he'd want to kiss and make love. Sexually he was more than competent. If I had a top ten, he would be number 2 on the list. Sex was so good that all would be forgiven. I was still working in the sweatshop. I was getting more and more depressed. I guess it was obvious to everyone around me at the factory. A co-worker told me that I probably could get workmen's compensation. She had done it a year ago, citing a mental breakdown. Because I was truly very depressed, I filed for it. I got the approval, but it took weeks before I would get the first check. That first check would be the big one. So, I was holding on to my sanity and dignity by my fingertips. One night I was in such a sorry state that I took a handful of tranquilizers. I called my friend Annmarie, who was studying to be a nurse. She told me to immediately put my finger down my throat and throw up. After I did that, I realized how mentally unwell I was. As soon as that check came in, I left. I remember taking my wedding band off and leaving it on the kitchen table for him. No note just the ring. I rented a room in the Carter Apartments for Women.

Men were not allowed in the building. One day Jack came into the building and up the stairs to the apartment I was staying in. He knocked on the door and again begged for forgiveness. I stood fast. I had never lived alone. I was very lonely. I sent him away, determined to face my fears. At night I would experience intense anxiety. I was incapable of being alone. I would just have such apprehension. I started going to a bar called O'Tooles to get through the night. It was near the University of Scranton campus. I would go there and have a drink. Inevitably a guy would buy me a drink or two. By the time I went home, I was sufficiently buzzed to go to sleep. That was my solution at the moment. One night I met a guy that used to be a neighbor when I was growing up in South Side. James B. was a little older than me. He sat down in the booth and we had a drink. Suddenly I looked up and there was Jack and his mother, Dorothy. She was an aggressive, intimidating woman. She could scare the shit out of anybody. They came over to the booth where I sat with James. Dorothy started to berate me and call me a whore and a slut. Shouting that I was a married woman and here I am in a bar with another man. James knew me since we were kids. He knew I was none of those things. He just sat there calmly and smiled. Unable to rattle us they finally gave up and left. That night was the first time I had sex outside of my marriage to Jack. Afterwards, I said to James, "Am I going to hell?" He laughed and said not for having sex. He really made me feel better that night. Ironically, I ended up getting a job at O'Tooles as a cocktail waitress. That summer I never felt lonely again. It was 1970, The Summer of Love. Everyone just wanted to get high. Make love not war. The marriage to Jack had been a futile attempt to break the cycle of feeling powerless. I filed for divorce. Chapter 11 Petty Tyrants

The seventies turned out to be a trend-laden, fad-crazy decade. We all listened to 8-track tapes of Jackson Browne, Olivia Newton-John, and Marvin Gaye. Disco was born, the sounds of Abba, the Bee Gees and Donna Summer. Every party you went to would have cheese fondue. This was the decade of wife-swapping parties and smoking pot. I guess Jack was ahead of his time with the wife-swapping attempt. People were wearing what they wanted, growing their hair long, having sex, doing drugs. For the first time in my life, I was totally free to do as I liked. I smoked pot and liked it. No, I loved it. Sex didn't mean love so there was a lot of that. One day, another Jim walked into my life. I was working at O'Tooles. Jim Brazil watched me whizzing around serving drinks for about an hour. He then called me over to his booth and asked me if I wanted a job. I said I already had a job. He wanted me to waitress at a new place on Moosic Street called, The Upstairs. It was run by Benny Santoro and Billy Schreiber. I took the job and made more money right away. Grown men tipped better than college students. Billy Schreiber was a bit of a tyrant. You could never please him. Benny Santoro on the other hand was a doll. I didn't know at the time if Benny's family was "connected". There was a big crime family presence in Scranton. The Buffalino crime family, was an Italian-American Mafia crime family active in Northeastern Pennsylvania, primarily in the cities of Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, and Pittston. The Don lived in Pittston and was connected to the "Five Families". The organization spanned from Philadelphia to Los Angeles. Benny's father Vito was rumored to be one the Buffalino family's trusted soldiers. The Upstairs was primarily a forum for dancing and Rock music. It was ear splitting loud and hard to hear the drink orders. Billy did not miss my unmistakable ability as a cocktail waitress. He had more of a stake in the bar downstairs, simply called the Downstairs at the Upstairs. This was more of a laid-back lounge. He wanted me to work there. That meant he was now supervising me, not laid-back Benny. I remember one night the place was packed and I was the only waitress. Every time I walked by him, he would say, "Hustle, Hustle, Hustle." He really got under my skin. I was his best waitress, but he would never tell me that. There was a band that played upstairs that had an organist who was partly deaf. I thought that was

amazing that he was able to be a musician despite his disability. The Downstairs closed earlier than the Upstairs. After I finished work, I would go Upstairs for a drink. One night the band had me on stage with them. I couldn't sing or play an instrument, so they gave me a tambourine. I had such fun that night. Frankie, the organist, and I were very attracted to each other. We ended up at his apartment a few times. All I can say about sex with him was that it was quite acrobatic. I called him one night, a booty call to be honest. I had been drinking, but drove to his place in Dupont. I made a left turn that was too wide and almost hit another car. There was yelling and cursing. I did not get out of the car. There was not actually an accident, so I drove off. I still did not realize at the time that I had a problem with alcohol. Fourth of July that year, I had the day off. I made plans to go to a clambake with some friends. That morning, Billy S. called and told me I had to work. When I told him, it was my day off, he could care less. He said "Come in or you're fired?" I was angered, I yelled back, "I quit" and hung up the phone. Good thing I was living with my parents again because I was now unemployed. A few weeks later, I needed to take a cab somewhere. The cab driver looked familiar. It turned out he was a regular from The Downstairs. He told me driving a cab was just a side job. He was also the manager of a neighborhood bar called the Black Garter and could use a cocktail waitress. Unfortunately, Bill S, my former boss was the owner. He said don't worry, he never comes in. He won't even know you are on his payroll. The next week I started my adventure at the Black Garter. That's where I met Johnny Donahue. The universe just kept sending me clones of my father. I guess that happens until you learn the lesson the Universe is trying to teach you.

Chapter 12 Kismet

The first time I saw Johnny Donahue was when I walked into my new job at the Black Garter. I was there to start as a new cocktail waitress. It was a cheesy neighborhood bar with peanut shells on the floor. That was a big thing back in the 70s. Johnny was behind the bar having a drink, Dewar's on the rocks. He was the skinniest, whitest Irish guy I had ever seen. He had a crooked smile and straight brown hair. Nonetheless, the charm, the charismatic song of Ireland just oozed out of his body. Right from the beginning I knew I was in trouble. He wasn't handsome but there was a roguish attractiveness to his face. A vulnerability in his eyes and a rakish smile. He was very charming and very funny. He flirted with me from the second we met. The Black Garter was very accepting of drug culture. I was smoking pot on a regular basis as most of my friends and acquaintances were doing. I had a dealer named Kevin. I don't know if he's still alive, so I won't use his last name. I distinctly remember his full name because of writing him a check every week for \$20.00 for an ounce of marijuana. I just think that's amusing on several levels. First, that I wrote a check. I don't know what the prices are today, but \$20.00 for an ounce of Columbian Gold was probably cheap. Back in the day we rolled our joints by hand. We bought papers and there was an art to rolling the perfect joint. I had very small hands so I was very good at it. It was just understood that when you had a break at the bar you could go outside to the back parking lot and have a couple puffs on a joint. Then go back to work. One night it's very busy. On my break, I went out back with some people. We shared a joint. Johnny decided to play a joke on me that night. There was a bottle of beer in the cooler that had formed some ice on the bottom. When I went to pick up my tray of drinks for a table, he had put the drinks and that bottle of beer with the ice on my tray. Of course, the beer bottle was tilted. I didn't see the ice on the bottom. I just saw the tilted bottle. I started to get paranoid, anxious. My first thought was maybe the pot had been laced with LSD. I began to ask Johnny and people around me, "is that bottle tilted or am I seeing things?" They were all in in on the joke.

Everyone said, I don't know what you're talking about. Finally, after getting me sufficiently worked up they all started to laugh. Johnny picked up the bottle and showed me the little bit of ice on the bottom. That was the environment that I was working in, which I have to say I liked very much. Fun and games. Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll. The Seventies! Whenever business was slow Johnny would teach me how to make cocktails. The clink of the ice, the free pour of liquor, the shaker, it was an art form. The caveat was if I made it, then I had to drink it. I only tried to learn one or two drinks a shift. I remember so well his knowledge and skill. Then people drank very classic drinks. Yes, there were shot and beer drinkers. Yes, there were people that had scotch on the rocks or a glass of wine. However, there were also people that liked Sidecars, Old Fashioneds, Manhattan's and Martinis. I learned every one of those classic drinks from Johnny. I continued to work there a few months. Even though I was a waitress, it was like going to night school learning to be a mixologist. Johnny and I had been sleeping together. Naturally, he had the sexual prowess to match his charm. He also had this mysterious aura of a tragic hero. I always felt that he had some heartbreak buried deep in his soul. On the outside he had the banter and the sense of humor. However, it was evident that his innermost being was fiercely guarded. He was also a rogue with the ladies. I knew he was but I loved him anyway. I was spellbound. I believe we each have a major pattern to resolve in our lifetime. A major portion of my life was spent uncovering, forgiving, resolving that pattern. I still had decades to live before I would recognize my pattern. One day we heard there was an opening at the Hotel Casey. This iconic hotel had opened in 1911. At the time it was the largest hotel in Northeastern Pennsylvania with eleven stories and 250 rooms. Johnny and I both applied for the day bartending job. It was considered a landmark of the city of Scranton and one of the top hotels in the Northeastern United States. I did not tell Johnny that I was going to apply for the bartender job. I was in the middle of my interview when Johnny walked in. He was there to interview for the same job. The look on his face was priceless. Three days later the Hotel Casey called me and told me I had the job. It was a day job so that was good. But it was also boring because during the day it was slow. The Hotel Casey bar sat on the corner of Adams and Lackawanna Avenues. There were three entrances to the bar. You could come in from a door on Adams Avenue or you could come in from Lackawanna Avenue or you could come in through the lobby. The bar was a beautiful mahogany oval shaped masterpiece. The logistics of the design meant if I was at one end of the bar and someone came in the other end of the bar, I would not see them. The result being I had to walk around the bar constantly. Round and Round, in fear that I wouldn't see a customer come in. At one point they offered me night shift. The night shift would be busier therefore my tip income would be much larger. I met a lot of very important people. Very well-known people, famous people, odd people. I also made phenomenal tips. To sweeten the deal, they gave me a hotel room to live in. When I got off work at one or two in the morning, I could just go up in the elevator to my room. The Hotel Casey was comparable to The Plaza Hotel in New York City. Marble staircase, Chandeliers everywhere. They had a coffee shop, a barber, a fancy restaurant. The Gold Room and Mei King Restaurant were built in the French Renaissance style. Originally it was just the Gold Room. The Chinese restaurant was added to attract more diners. There was a bell hop named Marshall. Everyone else called him Peewee but I called him by his given name. A woman named Gina worked in the coffee shop. She became an unconventional mother figure for me. She was Vito Santoro's girlfriend. Vito was Benny and Jimmy Santoro's father. Since the early 1900's the Hotel was known as the unofficial Democratic Headquarters. Many politicians and famous people have stayed there. Just to name a few, Orson Welles, President Nixon, Nat King Cole, Robert F. Kennedy, Jerry Lewis, and Joe DiMaggio. About 1962 the hotel started to go downhill. In 1969 three doctors from Dunmore bought it, Frangelli, Scrimalli and Petrillo. Dr. Petrillo was Pete's Uncle. Pete Petrillo was quite a character. Downtown

Scranton was a little rough back then. I felt safe with all my male friends and living in the hotel. I was making a lot of money working there. I would make \$50-\$100 a night in tips. Almost all aspects of American society in the 1970s was marked by restlessness. My enjoyment of freedom for the first time in my life also led me to some bad habits. Drinking too much, overspending and a devil-may-care attitude about life in general. Addiction often goes together with avoidance. The opposite of that avoidance would have been self-reflection. I was not ready for that. Instead, I spent too much money on status symbols like clothes, jewelry, and weed. At 23 years of age, I had no inkling that not only was a recession coming, but my income would also take a nose dive.

“It often occurs to me that we love most what makes us miserable. In my opinion the damned are damned because they enjoy being damned.” Patrick Kavanagh Chapter 13 Hinky Relationships

Johnny and I continued in our relationship. He just laughed at the turn of events when I got the job at the Hotel Casey and not him. He also got a better job than the Black Garter. Ironically, it was at the Cheetah Lounge, where I had the run-in with the would-be rapist. He was drinking a lot more. Many bartenders tend to be alcoholics. It is the one job where you can drink booze for free and get away with it. Johnny's drink was Dewar's Scotch on the rocks. One day I got a call that they had taken him by ambulance to the hospital. He was serving a customer and then he was on the floor unconscious. Bloodwork showed severe anemia and liver problems. Not many people were using the word alcoholic then, but that's what he was. The way I was drinking put me on that road too. The next night a beautiful black woman came in the Hotel Casey bar. Her name was Nikki. She ordered a drink, an expensive drink, Courvoisier cognac. I poured it into the special tall glass for brandy and gave it to her. We started talking and I just fell in love with her immediately. She was unabashedly honest and forthcoming about her life. She didn't seem ashamed about anything. Then customers started to come in. Eventually, a man sat next to her and asked to buy her a drink. I poured her another Courvoisier. Within a few minutes the man left and before he left, she told him tip the bartender. Then she looked at me and said take my brandy and put it under the bar. The next time a man buys me a drink give me that drink back and you keep the money. That was how our relationship started. She taught me a little con game. She came back after 20 minutes or so looking just as perfect as when she had left. I found out later that her perfectly coiffed hair was a wig. She sat back down at the bar and asked me for some ice water. In no time another man came in and we went through the same scenario. I got the drink from under the bar kept the money for the drink. She reminded him to tip me. She was a force of nature, beautiful and intelligent. That was my first up close introduction to the world of prostitution. Nikki was dating a very famous basketball player at that time. He was married to his first wife then, therefore the affair. He paid for her apartment in New York. He had a game in Scranton that weekend at the CYC. He toured with the Harlem Globetrotters. The team combined comedy as well as great athletic ability in their show. They were a world-famous exhibition basketball team. He's not alive so I can name him, Meadowlark Lemon. He and Nikki were scheduled to have a romantic rendezvous at the Casey. She came in two days earlier to make some extra money. I asked her since he was rich, why didn't she just let him take care of her. She told me a woman should always have her own money. I grew up watching Leave it to Beaver and The Donna Reed show. Housewives wore pearls and high heels while they vacuumed the carpet. I had been brainwashed by the propaganda that women needed men. They couldn't ever be entirely self-sufficient, especially if they wanted children. Women's Liberation was still in its infancy, so I was

mesmerized by this strong independent woman. That fact that she prostituted herself did not matter. If that was her choice, who was I to judge. She became my first female black friend. The next night we went to dinner in the Hotel Casey Gold Room. It was a very expensive place. I could have paid my way, but Nikki insisted on paying. She also tipped our bartender in the Gold Room very well. Unbeknownst to me, she also gave him her room number in a note. So, she had a little fling with him later that night. After dinner, I went up to Nikki's room and we talked and smoked pot. She taught me a lot about life in the few days I knew her. She introduced me to the word "hinky". She was telling me a story and said "I knew something was hinky." When I questioned the word, she told me it meant something that is wrong or out of place. I don't think it was in the Oxford dictionary yet. After that, whenever I thought someone was dishonest or suspicious, I used that word. It made me feel very cool. I really admired her independent spirit. I didn't care what she did for a living. She was just a unique person, one of a kind. I only spent a week in her company, but a strong bond was created. A bond that would resurface years later. Meanwhile, Johnny and I decided to get an efficiency apartment on Spruce St. The only catch was the owner was very conservative. If she was going to rent to a couple, they had to be married. Johnny had a friend that lived in the building. Her name was Franny. Franny was having an affair with one of the bar owners in town. I won't say his name because his family is still alive and I don't want to tarnish his reputation. He paid for her apartment. Franny gave a recommendation to the landlady and told her we were married. We got the efficiency. Johnny was not just a bartender; he was also a musician. This is where I think I really started asking for trouble, dating musicians. Word of advice to the young, never date a musician. He played drums in a band. I can't remember the name of the band. But they were very popular around town. They played at The El Dorado. This bar was owned by the DiLeo family and it was right across the street from the Hotel Casey. I was really in love with Johnny. At least I thought I was in love and of course I thought he loved me. It would be a long time before I understood that saying I love you does not necessarily mean I love you. I spoiled him. I was making so much money at the Hotel Casey. I was shopping the best stores. I started to buy him clothes too. I thought everything was perfect with us. Until one day I came home from a shift at the Hotel Casey and the closet was empty of all his clothes. I can still remember my heart sinking to the floor. It was so painful to think that he had left me. We never had a spat or any disagreements. I went to the El Dorado and sure enough, he was sitting at the bar with some floozy. I knew the girl from the bar scene. Let's just say I had one hell of an outburst. That was probably the first time I heard the line "It's not you it's me ". My heart was shattered into a million pieces. Nikki was in town so I went drinking with her to ease the agony of abandonment. Teary eyes and all. I put on my bright yellow mini dress, my shag wig and my go-go boots and tried to drink my pain away. You learn lessons in life by feeling the feelings. I guess I wasn't ready for the lesson yet. As they say, when the student is ready the teacher will appear.

Chapter 14 Men of Montedoro It was widely known that Russell Buffalino became acting boss of the Pittston area after John Sciandra's death in 1949. The daily command of the Sicilian Men of the Montedoro Mafia had passed to younger men. Russell Bufalino had been born in Montedoro Italy. Shortly after, his father immigrated to the United States, settling in Pittston, Pennsylvania, working as a coal miner. With his mother and siblings, Buffalino entered the United States through the Port of New York in December 1903. A few months later, Bufalino's father died in a mine accident, and his family returned to Sicily. Buffalino emigrated to the United States again in January 1906. He married Carolyn "Carrie" Sciandra who came from a Sicilian Mafia family. Buffalino worked alongside many Buffalo mobsters, some of whom would become top leaders in the Buffalo crime family and other future Cosa Nostra families along the East Coast of the United States. These relationships proved very helpful to Buffalino in his criminal career. Family and

clan ties were important to Sicilian-American criminals; they created a strong, secretive support system that outsiders or law enforcement could not infiltrate. A significant friendship was with his first boss, and fellow immigrant from Montedoro, John C. Montana. Buffalino became the boss of the entire Northeast Pennsylvania crime family. A 1956 plane trip to Havana, Cuba, got Buffalino in trouble with immigration officials, as he improperly claimed U.S. citizenship upon his return. Buffalino's family began to emerge from under the Genovese family shadow in the 1960s. The US attempt to deport Buffalino was derailed when the Italian government refused to accept him. Buffalino was one of the U.S. Mafia's most influential bosses until his death in 1994. He was engaged in labor racketeering, loan-sharking and gambling. The FBI believed he had a hand in narcotics trafficking. He is widely believed to have had a part in arranging the disappearance and murder of former Teamster President Jimmy Hoffa. I became acquainted with a lot of rumored "mob soldiers". I can't authenticate connections to the Men of Montedoro Mafia for all of them, but their actions and crimes certainly make me suspect that they were. I cannot prove that Elmo (Al) Baldassarri was part of the Buffalino crime family. However, he was indicted on use of interstate telephone facilities with the intent to carry on an unlawful activity, and use of a telephone for the transmission in interstate commerce of information assisting in the placing of bets or wagers on sporting events or contests. I believe many of those calls were made on the public phone booth in the Hotel Casey Bar, while I was behind the bar. Al Baldassari also had many legal businesses such as real-estate developments. Al developed Moosic Lake, Bellefonte Apartments and the land which ultimately became Mount Margaret Estates. He had a passion for music and dancing, which prompted him to open the infamous Orchid Club and Spruce Street Record Shop. He loved Bocce Ball, and had a Bocce court behind the Silhouette bar. This place was owned by his "Goomah" Helen. The Hotel Casey was a known hangout for a few of these soldiers. They called the bar I worked at their office. There was a phone booth in the corner where they used to get calls. These guys would bring their mistresses (goomahs) on Friday night for drinks and dinner. Then on Saturday they would come in with their wives. Cheating was a blatant and accepted practice. I started seeing someone in this group of quasi gangsters. Rocco was married and twenty years older than me. He couldn't be with me on weekdays and didn't want me to be alone when I closed the bar. So, he hired a bodyguard for me. My "bodyguard" Bob was the bouncer at the El Dorado across the street from the Casey. Every night, he would show up to escort me across the street. I would have a few drinks. When I was ready to call it a night, he would escort me back to the Hotel elevator in the lobby. After a few dinners with Rocco, I received a call on that pay phone while I was working. An ominous male voice informed me if I kept seeing Rocco, I would be shot dead in the street. I stopped seeing Rocco. I also briefly dated a well-known musician, Jimmy Tigie. Gosh, I knew a lot of Jimmies! The chemistry between us was intense. He was a lounge player at the CiCi Lounge. He was also married but I think his wife must have turned a blind eye to his extramarital affairs. She was never at any of his gigs. Jimmy T. was a jazz musician, a cool cat. He taught me a lot about jazz music. I had not been interested in that genre before. Miles Davis and Billie Holiday, were his favorites. After we were both done working, we would listen to this music in his car and smoke a joint. He was a good lover, but a little kinky. One night he asked me for a favor. He had a friend of his who was disabled. He wanted us to have sex in front of him. I guess voyeurism was his friend's thing. I said no! After that our relationship cooled down quickly. I didn't want to be with someone who wanted to pass me around like a plaything. I was devastated by my breakup with Johnny. As a result, I did not want to fall for anybody again. I made three pals and drinking buddies instead. Jimmy DeNinno, Jimmy Santoro, and Pete Petrillo. Pete was related to one of the owners of the Hotel Casey. They were all wild and crazy, but so was I. I would get done bartending and meet one of them at Eagan's for a drink. Eagan's was right

across from the Casey. It stayed open after 2 AM, illegally. You had to go to the back door and knock. They had to know you before they let you in. You could order a steak at 2 in the morning. I can't count the times I came out of that bar with the sun coming up. Pete introduced me to exotic drinks, Chartreuse, Absinthe, and Mezcal (with the worm at the bottom of the bottle) just to name a few. Jimmy DeNinno was 13 years my senior but he liked hanging out with the young crowd. He was a jeweler and always had several gold chains around his neck. He also had a perpetual tan, 12 months of the year. Pete Petrillo was cute but kind of manic. I never saw him chilled out or calm. One night he knocked on my door in the hotel. He had a box with several cartons of cigarettes. He asked if I could hide them for a couple of days. I did. Pete did not have a steady job so I assumed he supported his life style by stealing or some other chicanery. Jimmy Santoro was always very sweet to me, but he had a crazy side. A side that came out when he drank too much. He used to confide in me about his jealousy in his relationships. The girl he was currently dating at the time was named Doreen. She was a beautiful girl with flaming red hair and a gorgeous body. When she broke off the relationship, he did not take it well. The next Friday night was a very busy night at the Casey bar. We had three bartenders on duty to handle the crowd, Butch Thurman, and an older woman named Little Judy and myself. Doreen was in a corner talking to a young man. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Jimmy S. enter by the Lobby entrance. I looked at him and his face looked deranged. I knew he owned a gun. Instinct told me that he might have it on him. I slipped out from behind the bar and grabbed him by the arm. I asked him if he had his gun on him. He told me yes and said "I'm going to kill that bitch!" I used all my powers of persuasion to talk him out of it and he left. I let out a sigh and went back behind the bar to finish my shift. When I looked up there was Marshall (Peewee) in the lobby door entrance. He had seen the whole situation. He never spoke about it, but every time I saw him there was a look exchanged between us. A look that said we shared a secret. These downtown boys were all a little crazy. Pete and Jimmy D. got very competitive over me. I would be in Jimmy's luxury apartment and Pete would call. I'd hear him ask if I was there. Jimmy and I were smoking a joint and listening to the album "Jesus Christ Superstar". I got on the phone and teased him about being jealous. One night, Pete took me up to the roof of the Hotel Casey. We smoked a joint and then he took me to the edge of the roof. We were eleven stories up. He said, "Look at those people down there. They look like ants." It wasn't what he said but how he said it that creeped me out. It was time for me to quit hanging with my drinking buddies. Chapter 15 Proximity

Even though I stopped hanging with my three drinking buddies, I was still doing some risky things. One night, I was having drinks in Johnny Eagan's bar with a "new" male friend. You could smoke in bars back then. I would pretend to smoke to look cool. I would buy a pack of Newports. I would just hold the cigarette and pretend to inhale. The smoke would barely enter my mouth before I would exhale it. We were both sitting in a booth holding cigarettes when he suggested a game. He held the cigarette to his hand for 30 seconds. Then told me to see how long I could last. Without hesitation, I held the ember to the base of my left hand. I don't know how long it was but he said I won. I still have the round scar to remind me of how reckless I could be. I also did not realize that a pattern of self-harm was developing. Behavior that indicates a need for better coping skills. Several illnesses are associated with it, including depression, eating disorders, anxiety or post-traumatic distress disorder. Those at the most risk are people who have experienced trauma, neglect or abuse. For instance, if a person grew up in an unstable family. Later that week, Curt, my deflowerer from prom, walked into the Casey bar. I was not working that night. He had filled out that once scrawny body and looked quite attractive. He bought me a drink. I apologized for being such a bitch when I broke his heart. He was charming and funny. After several drinks I was a little drunk. We ended up at his place. His lovemaking had improved too. However, when

we were finished, he told me to get the hell out. He said, "I loved you with my whole heart and soul and you shattered that. I just wanted to even the score by rejecting you." I got dressed and left immediately. In retrospect, I don't blame him. I only hope that he obtained closure from our "one night stand". I was 22 years old and getting tired of nightlife and being alone. My biological clock was ticking. The Baby Boomer generation married young. Hell, I had already tried marriage before I was 21. I thought I could make a better choice this time. I had been dating musicians, drummers, and piano players. I had dated bartenders and bar owners. I did not want to get involved with married men or "made" men. None of the men I was meeting were the "marrying type". The pickings were slim in this town. There is a theory called Propinquity. In social psychology, propinquity from Latin propinquities, "nearness" is one of the main factors leading to interpersonal attraction. It refers to the physical or the psychological proximity between people. Two people who live in the same town possess a higher propinquity than those who live elsewhere. If I had gone to college or moved to Los Angeles, I would have had a vastly different selection of men. But the options were stymied by my parents, mainly my father. Scranton was my only resource for romantic relationships. I ended up marrying three times to men from Scranton. Not just Scranton but they all were from South Scranton. The bouncer from the El Dorado who had been my bodyguard kept flirting with me. He was not my type. He hinted that he was a collection enforcer for one of the crime families. So far, my type always seemed to end in heartbreak. I told him if he had his hair styled and bought some nicer clothes, maybe I would go out with him. A few days later, he showed up looking like a different person. He cleaned up nice. We started dating. Bobby Riccardo seemed like a safe bet. Everybody seemed to like him. For some reason, most people called him Harpo. I was never sure why. He said it was because of a boxer that was deadly in the ring. He thought it was Max Baer, who did have many nicknames. Bob had been a boxer in the Army or so he said. At any rate, I never called him Harpo. Since, he was the bouncer and doorman at the El Dorado, I spent even more time there. Butch Thurman, Babe Tononi and Sonny DiLeo were the bartenders there. They too had a huge circular bar. Butch worked at all the bars downtown when needed, he was one of the best. There was also a dance floor with a disco ball. It was a lot wilder than the Hotel Casey bar. Drag Queens, gangsters, prostitutes, all types came in there. I made friends with a transsexual named Lovey. Lovey was always dressed to the nines from head to toe. Nails painted, earrings, sequin dress and high heels. One night we both needed to use the ladies' room. I was only in there two minutes when a girl came in asked if I was the bouncer's girlfriend. I said yes. She told me he had said, "She better get her ass out of there right now!" When I came out, he wanted to know why I would go to the ladies' room with a drag queen. I tried to explain to him that I thought of Lovey as female when she dressed like that. Gender never occurred to me. Obviously, Bob was very narrow minded. That night I would find out how toxic his sense of masculinity really was. It was closing time and the staff was sitting at the bar having a drink. Bob challenged Butch to an arm-wrestling match. Even though Butch was on the skinny side, he was known to be quite good at arm wrestling. The first match Butch won. The second match Bob won. They had to have a tiebreaker. The two locked arms and both held on like they were fighting for their lives. After a few minutes, Bob put in an extra thrust. There was a sound I had never heard before. The sound of breaking bones. He had broken Butch's arm. I remember feeling sick to my stomach. I didn't know anything about Toxic Masculinity when I was young. Even though, I had been victim to it many times. Men who had been violent, unemotional, sexually aggressive, and so forth. Men who thought that REAL men need to be strong and that showing emotion is a sign of weakness, unless it's anger, that is considered okay. The problem is these types hide that side of their personality when they are courting you. That's what Bob did. Bob pulled out all the stops to woo me. Took me to the fanciest restaurants in

Scranton, Dunmore, and the Poconos. He would order Chateaubriand and escargot to impress me. He told me he didn't really like that I worked at the Hotel Casey, especially the night shift. I had kept the efficiency apartment on Spruce Street that I had rented with Johnny. The room at the hotel was free, but I didn't want to lose the apartment so I was still paying rent there. Bob wanted to spend the night with me. He lived over the El Dorado and I was not about to be that public with our relationship. If I took him to my room in the Hotel Casey, I would look like a prostitute. I told him that the landlord of the apartment thought I was married to Johnny and I couldn't risk losing the apartment. It so happened that outside the apartment window was a fire escape. Bob's solution was that he would come in through the fire escape so no one would see him. A few days later, I had pulled a day shift at the Casey. I walked Al Baldassari. He always sat by the phone booth at the Lackawanna Entrance. This was a common thing. People would come and go, giving him money or slips of paper. The pay phone would ring and he would be making deals or I suspect taking sports bets. That day he asked me if I would come work for him. He wanted me to work the day shift at the Silhouette. The thing about the Silhouette was that it was a cozy little bar that didn't do much business during the day. However, after dark it was known for being a gay bar. His girl Helen worked that shift. He said he would pay me more than I was making at the Casey. I really think Bob called in a favor to get me that job. Working the huge bar at the hotel was physically taxing so I said yes. I really made decisions quickly in my twenties. In a nanosecond everything would change, although I didn't know it at the time. Every choice we make activates a unit of power. The struggle for power was about to begin once again. Chapter 16 Lies and Lasagna

The first big lie. Bob took me to meet his mother, Connie. She had divorced Bob's father after having three children. She then married Robert Hoppel and had a daughter with him. I had graduated from High School with his half-sister, Marianne. His mother had made a nice traditional dinner of homemade lasagna. She informed me that she rolled the pasta herself. I wasn't impressed. I used to watch my grandmother make pasta from scratch. She would hang the strips on the clothes line in the cellar to dry. After dinner and a game of Gin Rummy, we went into the parlor. She looked at me incredulously and said, "What are you doing with him?". I said we were in love and getting married in November. That's when she told me that his name had been changed from Riccardo to Hoppel when she remarried. I was upset. First, because he hadn't told me himself. Secondly, because I wanted to continue to identify as Italian. Now I found out I would have a German surname. The Second big lie. Bob told me he was taking me to Las Vegas for our honeymoon. The night before our wedding, he informed me the money he was counting on didn't come through. So instead, we were going to Washington, D.C. I had packed for sunny Vegas and now had to repack for frigid Washington. After our short "honeymoon" I went back to bartending. I loved working at the Silhouette. Al had nothing but 40's music on the jukebox. Jimmy T. had already introduced me to some of the great jazz and blues musicians of that era. My favorite on the jukebox was "I CAN'T GET STARTED" – sung by Bunny Berigan 1937, written by Ira Gershwin. "I've flown around the world in a plane I've settled revolutions in Spain The North Pole I have charted but can't get started with you." That song spoke to my soul. Stuck, not getting started was how I felt about my life. The Silhouette lounge was so slow during the day, that my only customers were usually the Military Recruiters that had an office next door. We would play liar's poker with dollar bills and I usually won. I guess I had a good poker face. I would do the daily crossword puzzle from the Scranton Times every day. The Navy recruiter was impressed that it took me 30 minutes or less and that I did it in ink not pencil. There was one guy that always flirted with me. His name was Terry and he worked at one of the banks downtown. He would come in after work and always had a funny story about one of the customers. Sometimes we would be the only two people in the bar. We had some deep conversations. It was nice

to have someone to talk to that shared some of my ideas on life. After a few weeks he begged me to have a drink with him outside of my workplace. I was planning on going out with my friend that night at a place called Papa Joe's. He met me and my friend Sally at the bar. It was a large place with lots of tables and a dance floor. Sally had brought a date that night. So, there were four of us. Sally was the first to notice Bob barreling through the door. Terry got up and went to the men's room and I put his drink in front of Sally's friend. That was a close call. One of his spies must have told him I was there. Chapter 17 Crimes and misdemeanors

There a few famous people from Scranton besides President Joe Biden. One of them was Jason Miller, who starred in the 1973 horror film *The Exorcist*. His family moved to Scranton in 1941, where Miller was educated at St. Patrick's High School and the Jesuit-run University of Scranton, where he received a degree in English and philosophy. New Year's Eve 1974, Bob was bartending at Preno's Restaurant and Bar. I had the freedom that night to go for a drink with friends. We stopped at Mooney's, a little hideaway downtown. There was Jason Miller, having a drink at the bar. I had run into him once before at another bar when I was single. I didn't think I made much of an impression. In case you are too young to know who Jason Miller was, his son is the actor Jason Patric. I walked up to him and started with "So we meet again". He pretended to remember our prior encounter and bought me a drink. I wanted to impress him with my knowledge of his career, that I knew more than just his role as the priest in "The Exorcist". I told him I really liked his performance in *The Nickel Ride*. I didn't know it at the time, but he had been offered the starring role in *Taxi Driver* but turned it down for *The Nickle Ride*. He said that might not have been the best career move. In 1982, Miller returned to Scranton to become artistic director of the Scranton Public Theatre. His alcoholism had gotten more progressive. His marriage to Jackie Gleason's daughter had ended in divorce. In 1972 he won a Pulitzer Prize for his play, *That Championship Season*, which also won the 1973 Tony Award for Best Play. In 1982, Miller directed the screen version of *That Championship Season*. Featured in the cast were Paul Sorvino, Martin Sheen, Stacy Keach, and Bruce Dern. His own film career was sporadic, as he preferred to work in regional theater. He died of a heart attack in a Scranton tavern, Farley's Bar downtown in 2001. That night at Mooney's, I was loving the attention from this celebrity. He was flirting with me and buying me drinks. He said he hoped for a kiss at midnight. I looked at my watch and it was 11:30 PM. I had to get back to Preno's. So, I left and headed back. When I walked in, I said to Bob, "I left Jason Miller for you"! He was not amused. The bartending gig at Preno's was supposed to be a permanent job. Bob had a great memory so learning the drink recipes was easy for him. But after a few months, the Preno's replaced him with one of the brothers. Family first. Bob always exaggerated the truth to others. He was a liar and a con-man to the bone. He said things that were patently untrue to make people like him more. He would fold his money with the twenties on the outside and the ones, inside. You would see this wad of money, wow. Not knowing it was all ones except for the two twenties on the outside. Bob would lie about everything. If we were renting a cottage at a lake, he would tell people we bought the cottage. I think he was always trying to look like he was more successful than he was. The third big lie. A person of interest with ties to the Buffalino family backed Bob in buying an Adult Bookstore downtown. The catch was they wanted it in my name not Bob's. I think it might have been a money laundering operation. He was there all day and at night he would be out trying to con people. I was at home with our first born. After a few months there was a robbery overnight at the book store. The insurance company did not believe it was a genuine theft. There was an investigation and a warrant issued for my arrest for fraud. Bob and his partner said don't worry, nothing will happen. I was named as the defendant. My

name was in the newspaper. As promised the case never went to trial, but my good name had been tarnished for life. I became pregnant again with our second daughter. Even with all his hustling and hours spent away from home there wasn't much money. We had moved after Bob had an argument with my father. We were living on the first floor of an apartment building on Pittston Avenue. There was a pizza place next door. I was making artificial floral centerpieces and displaying them in the pizza parlor, to make some money. I had gained a lot of weight after two pregnancies in 18 months. A doctor put me on diet pills. Two blue & oranges, two green and two yellow capsules. I could not tolerate that much speed. Bob told me people would pay good money for these pills. I started selling them when I worked in the coat check room. The pills had nicknames. The blue and orange capsules were the strongest. They were called Hojo's because they were the same colors as the Howard Johnson restaurant chain. They were the most expensive at two dollars a pill. In today's currency that would be about \$6. The other pills were a dollar each. Two of the doctors that sold these drugs ended up in jail. However, not before years of doling out amphetamines to anyone who asked. It helped if you were overweight and didn't look like a drug addict. I made an income from those pills for several years. I never felt like a criminal, even though I was literally a drug dealer. I was following the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, "the good will have an incontestable utility over the evil." The most common example was if a beggar, pressed by hunger, steals from a rich man's house a loaf of bread, which perhaps saves him from starving. I needed to take care of my children using any means available.

Life's not black-and-white. Sometimes the ends justifies the means. Emily Giffin Chapter 18 Hierarchy of needs

Inconsistency became a normal part of my life after I married Bob. When we moved into the place next to a pizza parlor, it was incongruously right next door to my parents. The apartment building had several floors with the pizza parlor next to our first-floor apartment. I had worked in the insurance field and knew the importance of renters insurance. I had taken out a \$10,000 policy. We were only there a few months when the pizza place had a big damaging fire. Luckily, I was not home. I was pregnant with our second child and was taking a nap with my toddler. My friend Carol showed up and we went for ice cream. I returned to find the building on fire and my mother crying in the alley. She wasn't sure if we were in there. My guardian angel at work again. When the insurance adjuster showed up, I was pleased that I knew him. It was Frank Jenkins, who I had worked for a few years back. He told me, he would put it in as a total loss due to fire and smoke damage. Then he lowered his voice and said, "You can probably salvage most of it." I received a check for several thousand dollars. Now that we had some extra money, we were finally able to make that trip to Las Vegas. My parents watched our daughter when we flew to Vegas. I was pregnant and it was unbearably hot in Vegas. Bob wasn't very good or lucky gambling that trip. We were completely broke our last day there. We had gone off the beaten path of the strip to get a cheap dinner Downtown. Walking to our hotel in the blazing heat, we saw a pay telephone. Bob put a quarter in to call a cab. The phone wouldn't accept his coin. After a few tries, he became enraged. He began to hit the pay phone over and over. All of sudden, quarters started to pour out of it like a slot machine. We did have a good laugh about that crazy event. We returned home and had to move again. We ended up a few blocks away in a four-apartment building on South Webster Avenue. Ironically, my friend Arlene lived in the apartment right next door. So, her little girl and my toddler played together and I had a friend to talk to. I had my second child. I did not want to get pregnant again so I started taking birth control pills. That meant I could not breast feed. Unfortunately, the new baby did not do

well on formula. She had colic and would keep me up all night. I would give her a warm bath, rock her and sing to her while rubbing her tummy. Finally, she would fall asleep. An hour or two later, her older sister would wake up. Their father would come in and go directly to bed. I was more than a little tired. One day a man knocked on the door and told me he was here for the TV. I asked what he was talking about. He said Bob owed him money and told him he would give him the TV. I promptly informed him that was not going to happen and slammed the door in his face. Bob was not only not making money gambling, but was losing and obviously a lot. I had not been able to wear my diamond wedding ring after I had my second child. My hands were still very swollen. I was trying to sell things to make ends meet. A couple came to look at the bassinet, which was now too small for my youngest. They bought it and I was able to pay the electric bill. A few days later I noticed my ring was missing from the bedroom dresser. When I told Bob, he said that the couple must have stolen it. Instinctively, I knew that he must have taken it and hocked it. More lies. I had to go on public assistance and get food stamps. To qualify I had to state that he did not live with me. That was not far from the truth. He was hardly ever home. I was at the end of my rope with Bob. I demanded he go to marriage counseling with me. If he didn't, I would leave him. That was a futile threat at the time. He agreed and I made an appointment with Catholic Social Services. The young man, Paul, was very compassionate. He told us to each take a turn speaking about how we felt. I went first and poured my heart out. When it was Bob's turn, he said nothing. Absolutely nothing. The counselor said maybe we should try individual sessions first. I think he was trying to get Bob to trust him. Bob went one time. I kept going. After a few months the counselor, Paul, could see that I was in an untenable situation. He said even though this is a Catholic Agency, I need to give you some controversial advice. You need to leave him, go to college, and reach your potential. He then tried to explain Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Abraham Maslow suggested that people are initially motivated by a series of basic needs called the hierarchy of needs. Maslow states, "Self-actualizing people are gratified in all their needs, food, shelter, affection, respect, and self-esteem. A person has to first successfully navigate the hierarchy of essential needs. Once they have satisfied all their basic needs, Maslow proposed they then travel "a path called growth motivation". I was still struggling with those basic needs. I had been pushing that boulder towards the pinnacle of the mountain for years. I would never attain self-awareness and self-actualization, at this rate. I was still concerned with money for food, my safety and begging for love and attention. How could I fulfill my potential while I was in survival mode? If the hierarchy had to be attained in order, I was not going in the right direction for self-realization. He pointed out that I was trapped in a marriage that would keep me from fulfilling most of those higher needs. I went home and pondered what he told me. I had never lost the desire to go to college. If I was staying in this marriage because of the children, that was not enough. Part of my low-self-esteem came from being overweight. I had gained over 50 pounds since I got married. The first thing I would do was lose the weight. I stopped eating junk food and went to bed hungry every night for a year. I lost the weight. I was watching TV one night, alone as usual, and there was a knock on the door. It was Nikki, the friend I had met in the Hotel Casey. She looked sick and even thinner than before. She told me that she had been diagnosed with Tuberculosis. She wanted me to know that before I let her in. The bacteria that cause tuberculosis is spread from one person to another through tiny droplets released into the air via coughs and sneezes. Once rare in developed countries, tuberculosis, infections began increasing in 1985, partly because of the emergence of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The kids were asleep and I was so happy to see her. She sat as far away for me as possible. We talked for hours. Some people you feel such a bond with. You may not see them for years, but the connection is still there. Neither Nikki or I had the life we had hoped for. Meadow Lark Lemon was no

longer in her life. After divorcing his first wife, he had become a born-again Christian. He married a woman with similar beliefs and fathered 10 children. Those carefree days of drinking and disco seemed so distant. A lot can change in four years. I told her I was planning to divorce Bob and go to college. She was very supportive and absolutely validated my decision. The last thing she said to me was “Dependency is weakness”. I never saw Nikki again. I heard she died a few years later.

“The flame that burns Twice as bright burns half as long.” — Lao Tzu

Chapter 19 College Girl

I applied for college tuition from the State. As a single mother of two they would pay my full tuition. They would also give me money for transportation. I submitted an application to the University of Scranton which was now a co-ed school. They tested me and gave me 6 credits for life experience. I was accepted and enrolled as a business major. I then looked for an affordable place to live. I found a home that was a split level. The owners would rent out the bottom half to me. Now the hard part, telling Bob. I told him I could no longer put up with his control and jealousy. Also, that he was never home and we couldn't pay the bills. He did not take it well, but he did not try to stop me from leaving. I was able to get the girls in day care also government paid. Unfortunately, they had to go to two different places because of age requirements. I also had not received the money for the car yet. My day started with getting them up and dressed. Then we would walk down the hill to the first day care. Drop off my oldest daughter. My other daughter and I would wait for the city bus on the corner. We would ride the bus to the second day care a few miles away. My youngest was not happy about it so the drop off took a little longer. She was three and a half and took quite a tantrum each morning. I felt just awful until one of the aides told me to look in the window after I left. Sure, enough she was playing happily with blocks. She just had a flair for the dramatic. I then walked about a mile to the college. I would go to classes and try to get some of my homework and studying done. No internet then. Research meant the library, and microfiche tapes. Microfiche is a piece of film cut to a specified size and shape usually approximating a library catalog card. Used to store catalogs, bibliographies, newspapers, and media just too voluminous to keep in a standard library. About 3:30 PM, I would start the return home. Walk the mile to the one daycare. Wait on that corner for the bus. Get off at the other daycare and then the three of us would walk up the hill home. The girls would be fed dinner, given a bath and then to bed. Now, I could study some more. At the time, I allowed myself one guilty pleasure. I had a bong for smoking pot. Paralleling the bong phenomenon of the seventies and the rising “hippie movement,” head shops and smoke shops gained momentum. Even in Scranton there was a place called 50 Kings downtown. That's where I got my bong/water pipe. I would fill the bottom part with red wine instead of water and the pipe with pot. I would sit on the couch smoking and studying till my eyes started to close. Believe it or not, I got straight A's. Although the college had gone co-ed, there weren't many females at the college yet. I remember

one professor announcing, "Only one student has received an A' in this class and it's a girl!" The anti-feminism was not hidden. I really worked hard at studying and decided to go out with my girlfriends one night for a break. My parents took the kids overnight. When I got home, Bob was waiting for me in the dark. He pushed me around, manhandled and threatened me. I called the police when I finally got away from him. This was 1977 and domestic abuse was not being addressed. Two women had been killed by their husbands in the past year in Scranton. They had both asked for protective orders. These orders won't necessarily stop an abuser from stalking or hurting a victim, they only permit the victim to call the police and have the abuser arrested if the order is violated. One woman was stabbed to death the other was shot. I had a protection from abuse order on file. The police officer said he couldn't arrest Bob because he wasn't on the scene when the police arrived. The cop told me to buy a gun. He told me if this happened again to shoot him. But he cautioned that if I shot my abusive husband outside to drag him inside. That is no lie. I would buy a gun but not that time. I filed and got a divorce. Bob still acted as if we were married. He had spies everywhere. If I did have a date, he would find out and show up. He would proceed to harass my date and threaten me. I didn't get too many second dates. I was on campus one day and he tried to hit me with his car. He literally drove over the beautiful grounds of the quad to terrorize me. It was working. I was getting very stressed. I needed to get a gym credit. I was 28 and not very athletic. The University of Scranton had a gun course that they would count as a gym. Perfect. The instructor had been a green beret in the military. He taught me how to shoot a handgun and a rifle. Those classes not only taught me how to shoot, but took away any fear of guns. That would turn out to be crucial knowledge. Chapter 20 Three Mile Island

The money came through that allowed me to buy a car. I bought a baby blue 1972 Mercury Cougar. I loved that car. I was able to drive the girls to day care and myself to campus. It certainly relieved some of the burdens of being a single mother. It was still hard to keep food on the table. Every month it seemed the cupboards would be bare before the food stamps were due. Then the universe sent me an angel in the form of a corner store owner. I started to buy a few things at a little corner store by my apartment. The owner saw that I was struggling. He would let me get a few things on credit every month. Then when my check came the first of the month, I would pay my tab. I managed to finish two years at the University of Scranton. The constant harassment and threats from Bob were wearing me down. I remember one night I found myself on the floor, unable to breathe. I managed to call my father. He talked to me until I could calm down. That might have been my first experience with a panic attack. I thought the solution would be to attend college out of state. But in order to keep my assistance, food stamps, child care etc., I had to stay in Pennsylvania. I applied to Wilson College for women in Chambersburg. Wilson College is a private, Presbyterian-related, liberal arts college. Founded in 1869 by two Presbyterian ministers, it was named for its first major donor, Sarah Wilson of nearby St. Thomas Township, Pennsylvania, who gave \$30,000 toward the purchase of the land. For 144 years, Wilson operated as a women's college. Unfortunately, January 1979 they were in severe financial trouble. I did not know that when I enrolled. I was accepted and packed up just our clothes and a few toys. It was the middle of winter. I drove myself and two kids to Chambersburg, where I had booked a hotel room. The next day, I was supposed to look at a trailer in Shippensburg. The hotel was a dive. We all slept in one bed. In the middle of the night, I woke up to find a cockroach on my youngest daughter's cheek. I brushed it off and then scoured the room looking for any more that I could kill off. I didn't sleep the rest of the night. The next day we moved into our little country trailer. It came furnished. I had enrolled the kids in the same daycare so no marathon drops offs. I threw myself into studying. I had no distractions. I had no friends, no family, no Bob. I stopped smoking pot and drinking wine. I needed my senses at full

capacity. I was studying one night after the girls went to sleep. This little field mouse came out of a corner and just sat in the middle of the room. I wasn't bothered by its presence at all. I was lonely so I guess I appreciated his company. I never saw a mouse after that night. If it had been a rat, I would have freaked out. My parents had told me a story about their first apartment. It was down by the Lackawanna River. Joe wasn't born yet so I must have been about 9 months old. My mother came in to check on me and found a river rat in my crib. It hadn't bitten me. It was just sitting in the corner of my crib. My mother let out a scream and it scooted out of the crib and out the open window. Although, I have no memory of the incident, the sight of a rat sends me into panic mode. Even if it's in a movie or TV show. I close my eyes and ask my husband to tell me when they are gone. I was at Wilson a few months when the staff went on strike. I would show up for class and there would be no professor. Written on the board would be "No Class Today, On Strike. "I could not believe my bad luck. Then one day, Bob showed up. He had tracked me down. If I could not get any farther away, I was doomed to have him in my life forever. I knew he had a friend in Harrisburg and he could just move in with him. Then he would resume tormenting me. I needed a new plan. March 23 1979, I decided to visit my family in Scranton and mull over my options. March 28 The Three Mile Island accident happened. It was a partial meltdown of reactor number 2 of Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station (TMI-2) in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, near Harrisburg, and 56 miles from where I was living. International Nuclear Event Scale rated the incident a five as an "accident with wider consequences. That made one decision easier. I wasn't returning to Shippensburg or Wilson College.

"If you knew how a journey was going to end, you could afford to be patient along the path" Jack Kornfield

Chapter 21

Catch 22

I could not go back. I could not go forward. I felt stuck. Bob begged me to let him have another chance. We were divorced, but he was never going to leave me alone. I felt vulnerable and condemned to a life of bondage with this brute of a man. He rented a mobile home in Honor Park ,Moosic PA. Nothing changed. If anything, he was even more controlling and jealous. There were no extras for my kids. I still had to struggle to get the essentials. There was a Kmart nearby. I was buying our clothes from Goodwill, but always went to Kmart for underwear. I was not going to buy used underwear. If something was too expensive there, I would switch tags. I would look for a similar item that was on sale and then put that sticker on the item I wanted. This worked for a long time. Situational Ethics. Moral decision-making dependent on a set of circumstances. The abuse was escalating. Bob would call me a whore and a slut. He would ask me how many men had I slept with while we were separated. There was a lot of pushing and shoving. One Sunday we went to this big annual clambake. It was a political event thrown by the Democratic party. All kinds of people were there because the beer was free. I was sitting by myself while Bob circulated looking for the possible marks for his next poker game. Eddie Evans came over to talk to me. He was someone I knew from working the bar circuit. I confided in him my plight. I told him I was worried that the manhandling was going to get worse. He told me "The bigger they are, the harder they fall". The best advice was to strike the first blow. After that self-defense advice, I went for a walk. I was walking around the edges of the event. Out of nowhere came someone from my past. I was face to face with Jack Calvey, my ex-husband. Instantly I felt butterflies in my stomach. The chemistry was still off

the charts, although I had not seen him in ten years. We walked into the woods away from prying eyes. I felt like it was a sign of some sort. After a stolen kiss or two, we made a date to meet at his house the next time Bob was at one of his all-night poker games. The night arrived and I had made arrangements for a babysitter. I went to Jack's house. It was really his girlfriend Laura's house, but she worked nights. We had sex. When we finished, I started to cry. It was gentle and tender intimacy. I just thought about the good memories and blocked out the rest. Here was my savior. My white knight that would free me from this trap. I know it sounds crazy, but I was more than a little irrational at the time. A couple of days later, I told Bob he had to leave. A very unpleasant battle ensued. He started packing, but every time he walked by me, he would kick me. I was holding my youngest child on my lap. She was crying and clinging to me so I was unable to remove her from the tantrum Bob was having. After two or three times I said, "If you kick me one more time, I am not responsible for what might happen". Of course, he kicked me again. Everything went black. There was a cordless phone next to me on the bed. With no forethought, I picked up the phone and shoved it right into his face. I broke his nose. He stopped kicking me.

Chapter 22 Betrayal and Retribution

I moved out of the trailer in Honor Park. The kids and I were now in a second-floor apartment on Capouse Avenue. Bob was still stalking me and harassing me. I was seeing Jack on a regular basis, one thing I knew for sure, Jack would protect me from Bob. I was still selling diet pills to implement my income. I had an odd layout for the apartment. I had to go down a flight of stairs to answer the door. I had people call ahead and after we finished the deal, they were supposed to lock the door behind them. This particular day, Jack was there. A guy came and when he left, he did not lock the door. He was bribed by Bob to leave it unlocked. Like a tornado, Bob came up the steps and attacked me. Jack jumped up and tackled him. They were rolling around on the floor. Thank God the kids were at school. Jack seemed to be losing the fight. I picked up a coffee mug and hit Bob in the head with it. It wasn't enough to render him unconscious, but the fight stopped. He cursed me out, but left. My White Knight had saved me or so I thought at that moment. When I had returned from my short stay in Chambersburg, my clientele for speed was very pleased. Even with the extra money from selling diet pills, it was still hard to make ends meet. Bob would not pay support. The Department of Welfare even took him to court. I had to testify. His lawyer was Jack Brier. When Bob took the stand, the judge asked him why he didn't have a job. He said he had bad hemorrhoids. You can't make this stuff up. The court system was very corrupt and an old boy's school. The judge let him off. I had a friend named Kathy that had a three-bedroom apartment in Green Ridge. She invited me to move in and split the rent. It seemed like an ideal solution at the time. My kids were just starting elementary school. I was hoping all the moving hadn't had a negative effect on them. I was not seeing anyone else but Jack. His girlfriend Laura had kicked him out when she found out about us. He moved into a tiny apartment in South Side. I bought him dishes and sheets and a mattress from the Salvation Army. I wasn't ready to have him move in with me and my kids. There was a woman who drank in the same bars as us. I wouldn't call Judy a friend, but an acquaintance. She had a barbecue one day that summer and invited us over to her house. There was a lot of drinking. I went into the house to get some pasta that was keeping warm on the stove. I looked out the kitchen window to see her sitting on Jack's lap. I calmly walked out and dumped the bowl of spaghetti on his head. Of course, Jack said it was nothing, just harmless fun. One day I showed up at his place unannounced and she was there. He was all flustered and sweaty. He denied anything was going on. When I would not buy that account of what I saw, he said he was going for a walk till I cooled off. After he left, Judy told me that they were in love and they were absolutely

involved. I told her she better leave and fast. I then proceeded to break every dish I had bought him. I cut up the sheets and ran a long slit down the mattress. I then put his clothes in trash bags and put them outside in the garbage can. She was married to a roofing contractor that Jack had worked for. I went to her husband Gerard's house and told him about the affair. Judy and Jack were so scared of what her husband might do that, they hid out for three days. Then they both called their significant other to grovel, apologize, lie, and charm their way back into our lives. The truth of the matter is that cheating and infidelity does not automatically cancel out love or what may be mistaken for love. I believed that I was safer with Jack in my life, even if in reality he was hurting me. He was keeping Bob at bay. I had a sense of dread that I would not be okay without him. I was also a sucker for his lies, "I'm so sorry. She meant nothing to me. " "I love you. Don't leave me. " You are the best thing that ever happened to me. You are beautiful". All those reasons and more caused me to forgive, forget and pretend that it wouldn't happen again. Bob had been dating a waitress named Jane since I had moved to Chambersburg. He didn't stop when I came back. I later found out that even when he was living with me, he was still seeing her. He got her pregnant. He was now living with her. He decided to start taking the girls on weekends. He had a built-in babysitter so he could still go carousing till all hours. After a few weeks he pulled one of his dirtiest maneuvers. Instead of returning the kids on Sunday night, he kept them. He then informed me that he was calling welfare to stop my check and food stamps. I would now be the parent that saw the girls on weekends. He underestimated how resilient I could be. I immediately got a job at Jim Theirs Dry Goods downtown. Basically, I was a sales person. One day Mr. Their let me arrange the store windows. I discovered I had a talent for retail window display. My windows seemed to bring more customers into the store. Spending weekends with the girls was great. I was able to get more quality time than I would during the week. Things were going smoothly. Then my roommate decided to throw a party. She never asked me if it was okay. She was a bartender and she invited everyone from the bar and then some. The landlord was not happy. The eviction notice came in the mail a few days later. I called him and explained I had nothing to do with the party. I was a responsible person and would like to stay on. Surprisingly, he agreed to give me a chance. Jack was getting some work as a roofer. I let him move in to help with the rent. Maybe that would keep him in line. Easter Sunday, I went to my parent's house for dinner. Jack was persona non grata so it was just me. The doorbell rang as we sat down to eat. There were my two adorable little girls, suitcases in hand. The oldest spoke up. "Daddy said if you don't want us, we will go to the orphanage." That's the kind of mean-spirited things he did. I am not a psychiatrist, but there was something majorly wrong with this guy. Was it a personality disorder? Sociopaths tend to lie, break laws, act impulsively, and lack regard for their own safety or the safety of others. Was he a psychopath? I read that a common sign of psychopathy is a socially irresponsible behavior, inability to distinguish between right and wrong, difficulty with showing remorse or empathy, the tendency to lie often, and manipulation. I only had Psych 101 in college, but his behavior did seem to fit the pattern. I was thrilled to get the girls back. I had to quit my job at Jim Theirs to take care of them. They seemed very happy to be home and told me Judy had been very mean to them. I got them back to school in William Prescott Elementary in Green Ridge. I also signed them up for catechism at St. Paul's church so they could prepare for first holy communion. One night Jack and I went out for drinks. The girls were staying overnight at my mothers. We liked this place in South Side called the Community Bar. We stayed after closing to have a nightcap with the bartender and one other patron. It was after 2 AM when we left. We walked to our cars parked on the street. Suddenly a car came out of nowhere. The driver left the car running in the middle of the street. The door opened and it was Bob. Before anyone could stop him, he punched me square in my face. I hit the street unconscious for a few minutes. We

called the police and an arrest warrant was issued. I naively thought because I had three witnesses that this would be a done deal. At the Grand Jury hearing, it appeared as if I was the one on trial. The relevant facts seemed to be that I was living with my first husband and out drinking at two in the morning. Jack and our two witnesses also testified. It was thrown out for lack of evidence. Furious, I went straight to the District Attorney's office. I said "I don't know what kind of bribe or deal was made, but I'm going to buy a gun for protection when I leave here". He said, "You should not tell me that." I immediately went and bought a 25-caliber pistol with a pearl handle. "People who confuse what they wish were true with what is really true create distorted pictures of reality that make it impossible for them to make the best choices." Ray Dalio Chapter 23 One flew over the cuckoo's nest

In October, Bob's girlfriend Jane gave birth to a baby boy. One of my friends called to tell me. I said one of the reasons I had stayed with Bob was because I thought he was faithful and had never cheated on me. She decided to set the record straight. Bob didn't cheat on you in the beginning, but he did start when you became pregnant the second time. He saw Jane even before the end of our marriage. This madman was stalking me while having a "relationship" with this other woman. Even though I had been divorced for over three years, I was devastated. I was angry with her for not telling me when it first started. I felt that if I knew, I would have left him a lot sooner. Jack and I were partying with a lot of his roofer friends. One of those friends was Sean, Judy's brother. He was always trying to get me alone. The one time he made an actual pass and I just pushed him away. He was miffed that I kept rejecting him. I guess that was why he had to try and destroy my present relationship. This night he told me that Jack and Judy were still seeing each other. I confronted Jack and he couldn't put on his liar's face quick enough. I slapped him and left with Sean. We drove around all night drinking. I usually didn't get sick when I drank but this night I did. I had him pull the car over and went into some woods to throw up. I still was holding the beer bottle. Without hesitation, I broke the bottle on a rock and started tearing at my left wrist. It was not a suicide attempt. It was a need for physical pain to alleviate the much deeper pain. It was also a cry for help. The next morning, I had my sister Ann take me to Scranton Counseling Center downtown. I told them everything. The counselor asked "Do you think you might harm yourself or others?" I said yes. I called my brother Joe and his wife Barb and asked if they could take my kids for a week. Of course, they said yes. They were moving to Arizona soon. They had three daughters. The cousins would have this last chance to be together. I was admitted to the seventh floor of the CMC Hospital. This was the psychiatric ward. At first, I looked around and thought I don't belong here. People were talking to themselves and doing crazy things like walking in circles. There was a young man named Tommy that I felt safe with. We played cards and watched TV. After 24 hours Jack came to see me and we were placed in a visiting room with glass windows. Tommy kept pacing back and forth and giving Jack dirty looks. We had ID tags on our wrists. Sometimes they would take us outside to the Nay Aug Park. I have small hands and wrists, so I could work the wrist band off. This way, if anyone I knew saw me, I could tell them I was a volunteer not a patient. Before I was discharged, I got a call from Bob. He acted sympathetic and concerned. He didn't think Jack was good for me or the kids. I told him I would rather stay in this dark place with Jack then go back to a darker place with him. After a week I was released. My kids and I returned to our apartment on Marion Street. One afternoon, Tommy showed up on my doorstep. He knew my name from the ID tags we wore in the hospital. It was easy to look me up in the phone book and find my address. He had developed a delusional attachment to me. Jack sets him straight that it was a one-sided relationship. He told him that he should never come here again if he valued his life. That was the last time I saw Tommy.

Chapter 24 Denial

Jack's abusive behavior escalated. Now when he would come home drunk, he would wake me up. Then he would interrogate me and accuse me of cheating again. The middle of the night inquisitions was eerily reminiscent of my childhood. Sometimes he would push me around. Once or twice, he slapped me. One night I hid under the bed until he fell asleep. Bob was still with his girlfriend Jane. Thankfully, the kids were with their father those weekends. There was a couple that lived on the third floor, Vernon, and Colleen. Colleen looked as Irish as her name. Vernon was a big black guy who always had a toothpick in his mouth. The weekends that Bob had the kids, I started to go upstairs to sleep in their apartment. Jack would knock on the door and I would hear Vernon telling him to go home. No matter how surly or unrelenting Jack was, Vernon remained calm and never raised his voice. Jack would finally give up and go downstairs to our apartment and sleep it off. Vernon became my protector. I had found a day-time bartending job in Throop. My shift didn't start until I dropped off the girls. There was after school day care at the school. Perfect hours. I also did well with tips. I had the perfect personality for a bartender. I could make conversation and tell jokes. I was also competitive and liked to win on the pinball machine. I was no pinball wizard, but I did pretty good. I was drinking every day. I also was driving home after work and not totally sober. We were still living in the apartment on Marion Street. My brother Joe, who had moved to Arizona called me. The house in Jessup that he had sublet was empty. The tenant had left abruptly, leaving him in a bind. He told me if I took over the mortgage payments and gave him \$5000, the house could be mine. I said OK, but I would not have the \$5000 right away. We moved to Jessup and started making a few improvements. There was an apartment upstairs and I rented that to one of my customers, Ethel. She was a sweet girl. Her boyfriend Fig came to My Place every day. He would order a beer and we would have a conversation about current events. He was an extremely intelligent man and a Vietnam veteran. Fig was in a methadone program. He would light a cigarette and at some point, he would nod off. I would just let him 'nap'. When his cigarette was getting close to the end, I would place it in the ashtray before it burned his fingers. Ethel and Fig were easy-going people. I don't know if it was trauma he witnessed in Vietnam or something else that brought him to the point in his life that resulted in heroin addiction. I do know that the methadone worked for him and he allowed him to be a responsible citizen. His girlfriend Ethel would watch my kids whenever I did a night shift at the bar. They loved her. I was working at My Place about a month when I found out the owner of the bar wanted to sell. I envisioned an opportunity. He didn't own the building. He owned the liquor license and everything in the bar. He had what is called an immovable license. That meant the liquor license could not be moved to another location. He was asking \$5000 for the business and liquor license. The landlord would also have to approve of the new tenant. I had worked in a few bars to know about front money from machine vendors. Basically, they would give you the loan if you put their poker machines etc. in the bar. Every week they would take a payment from the take in the machines towards the loan. I knew several vendors that would front me the cash. That night I told Jack. If we pulled this off, I would have the same hours. During the day I would take deliveries and keep the books. He could work nights. Of course, he was over the moon at the idea. I contacted McGraw and Son Amusements and they agreed immediately. In came the poker machine, the pool table, and Space Wars video game. The quarters put into those machines would be used to pay off our loan. We passed the interview with the landlord. I lied and told him that Jack and I were a married couple. By Thanksgiving, we were the owners of My Place Cafe. You would think owning a business and the prospect of owning a house would make my husband happy and content. But then again, his demons ran deep and dark. He was the oldest

of seven children. Both his parents were alcoholics. Like my childhood, he was expected to take care of the six younger siblings as needed. There was physical and emotional abuse from both parents. When the Juvenile Court Judge offered the military as an escape, he took it. He joined the Navy and hoped to be assigned to a Patrol Boat, a small rigid-hulled boat used to stop and search river traffic in areas such as the Mekong Delta. Instead, they sent him to Naval Air Station Keflavik, a U.S. Navy station at Keflavik Iceland, located on the Reykjanes peninsula on the south-west portion of the island. Its main purpose was to secure North Atlantic air routes. Although his dream seemed more adventurousness than mine, it still was a dream not attained. Many bartenders and bar owners are alcoholics. I am sure there are alcoholics that are good bartenders. Also that there are bartenders that are not drunks. That was usually the exception to the rule. I also knew recovering alcoholics who had very successful taverns. But many are directed to the bar business by the lure of "free" access to booze. I was a functional alcoholic that could have successfully run our bar business. The one flaw in my plan was Jack. My husband was an atrocious bartender. Blinded by a fabricated sense of self confidence, he had a severe case of bigshotism. He would not take money for drinks from his friends. He would leave the bar to be with a woman or drink somewhere else and put just anyone in charge. He also had no common sense. My shift was the moneymaking shift. I served cheeseburger and steak sandwiches for lunch. I soon made enough to buy Jack a used Volkswagen bus. Jack was not a good business man. He didn't like to charge his friends for their drinks. The one positive factor was that his friends liked to gamble. The poker machine took in a lot of money. The pool table held lots of quarters every week. McGraw Jr. would come in every Monday. He was pleased with the income from the machines. Our loan was paid off in four months. Now I could start saving up for the down payment for the Jessup house. We had a poker machine that was really the main source of income. The unwritten rule is if you don't know the person, as soon as they approach the machine, you tell them, "We don't pay out, it is strictly for amusement purposes only". Jack always failed to do that. When a lucky stranger came to our bar and hit a Royal Flush on the machine, he demanded the \$600 payout. Jack told him he had to speak to his wife the next day. Did I mention that Jack was also a spineless coward? He was unable to stand his ground unless drunk or holding a gun. I called our vendors McGraw and son. Bill Jr. came down immediately to meet with me and check the machine to verify the payout amount. He gave me \$600 in cash, but told me to try to talk him down to a lower amount. The way it worked the vendor and I would split the payout 50/50. The lucky S.O.B. showed up as soon as I opened the bar. I told him; I really did not know him. He was not a regular at the bar so I really did not have to pay him. He responded that the bartender should have told him that before he had invested \$100 into the machine. I offered him \$300 and he grudgingly accepted. When I gave Bill Jr. the \$300 back, he informed me that my half of the \$300 that was paid out would come out of my weekly take. I disagreed. If I had not got the compromise the vendor would be out \$300. My mindset was that the \$300 I talked him out of being my share. Therefore, I owed nothing. Keep in mind that I was on Food Stamps and in a shaky financial situation. There followed threats and raising of voices. I knew this business very well. Vendors were hungry to get their poker machines in a bar. I just picked up the phone and called another vendor, J & R Amusements. I then called McGraw and Son and told them to remove their machines or they would be on the sidewalk in an hour. An angry Bill Jr. showed up and removed their machines. J & R put in their machines and paid me a onetime sign-on payment. This all took place in a course of a day. The following week I got served with a summons to go before the Magistrate for Throop PA. I was not one bit nervous. Like I said I was familiar with how the bar business worked above board and under. I was sworn in and asked if the vendor in question loaned me \$600. I said no. I was asked if they had loaned me \$300. I said no. Then they called Bill Jr. to the

stand. Now realize he could not give the real details of the situation. Poker machine payouts were illegal. He made up a story about why he loaned me the money. The Magistrate then asked the all-important question. Did you get anything in writing? His answer was no. Did you get a receipt? His answer was no. Case dismissed. This may seem unethical on my part. Let me refer again to the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham, that the end justifies the means. I was also still only on that first rung of the Maslow pyramid of self-actualization. I was trying to survive. The life I was living was eroding my mind and soul.

"Beautiful souls are shaped by ugly experiences." Matshona Dhliwayo Chapter 25 False Hope

Jack continued the abusive behavior when he was drunk. More mental abuse than physical. However, I could see the escalation in the number of fights and the growing hostility when he was drunk. I told my oldest that if she ever saw him slap me to call the police. Jack wanted to get re-married. He did not want to lose a good thing. Just my name was on the liquor license. It was in his best interest that we marry. He said it was because we were soul mates. I should have known better. The Bible tells us a leopard can't change his spots. It's impossible for some people to change their character, even if they try very hard. So, we got married again that fall. I joked that Liz Taylor and Natalie Wood had also married the same man twice. Yeah, and Richard Burton was an alcoholic cheater and Robert Wagner was accused of killing his wife. There had been a strange woman, from the Throop neighborhood that started frequenting our bar. She seemed to come in whenever she saw Jack's van. I never considered her to be a threat. She was very plain, unkempt and acted erratically. When we got married, she showed up at the party with homemade bean soup. Jack and I just looked at each other as I poured it down the sink. It was a very bizarre wedding gift. I joked that it may have been poisoned. Two weeks later she called me at the bar. She said she was going to kill herself. One of the patrons knew her address. I immediately called 911. When they got there, they found she had hung herself. I was stunned. Was she that irrational that she imagined there was something between her and Jack? Or was she another victim of his serial cheating? I will never know for sure, but I expect it was the latter. True to form Jack could not change his innate nature. I believe Jack did love me until the day he died. His cheating had nothing to do with love. He would slip back into a very familiar pattern. I would think he was not cheating. Then it would become so blatant that it was hard to miss. Later, one of our bartenders told me terrible sexual things Jack did with women who were drunk and in the bar at closing time. Just like with Bob, I said "If I knew those things, I would have left him sooner." Up until now I had always assumed the sex, he had was consensual sex. He was coming home from his shift drunker and more abusive. False hope and denial are such strong factors in a dysfunctional relationship. Cheaters know exactly what powerful manipulation tools hope and denial are. The goal of a cheater is usually to keep the wife and still have flings. "Have the cake and eat it too." Jack wanted it all, the cake (My Place) and the affairs and the marriage. Eternal optimist and damaged creature that I was, I still thought things could change. Cheaters will use their fake remorse after each slip to keep you on the hook. They will feign regret, cry, say they can't live without you. They may even go to couples counseling. Jack used all the tools and then some. Because being alone is so frightening to most humans, we would rather stay in the muck than be on our own. Incredibly, I still held onto hope that things could change. And when hope fails, there is always denial. Chapter 26 Death by a thousand cuts

Knowing the difference between physical attraction and love was still a grey area for me. Attraction can make you go crazy about someone only while the lure persists. Once it is over, you won't even miss that

person. However, when you are in love with someone, you miss him/her even after years of break-up or separation. The fact that Jack and I had been drawn back together after ten years had convinced me we must be soul mates. I had a very good friend that told me that Jack was an alcoholic. I remember how strong my denial was at the time. Much later in life, I came to realize that not only was he an alcoholic but a sex addict. By way of a definition, "sex addiction" is described as a compulsive need to perform sexual acts in order to achieve the kind of "fix" like someone with opiate use disorder gets from using opiates. There's also a common belief that "once a cheater, always a cheater"—that it's only a matter of time before it happens again. Assumptions like these ignore the complicated web of considerations that go into deciding what to do after infidelity is revealed. Esther Perel, noted relationship therapist, wrote a book called "State of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity." It encouraged people to try to understand how and why affairs happen, but also how a relationship might get better—with lots of work—after infidelity. In practice, it tends to be uncommon for a relationship to survive several instances of cheating. Serial cheaters are exactly what their title describes: a person who cheats not only once, but multiple times within a relationship. Serial cheaters have personality disorders on the narcissistic borderline, sociopath spectrum. Their empathy synapses don't fire. They're wired wrong. Dr. Susan Edelman ultimately defines serial cheating as "a continuous pattern of seeking out sexual relationships with people other than your partner, without your partner being OK with it." The key piece of the definition is the lack of agreed consent from partners, and this is what makes cheating different from open relationships or throuples. Deception is the key part of cheating. Jack was a serial cheater. He was deeply, profoundly fucked up. Personality disorders do NOT get better. These people congenitally lack the ability to connect intimately with you. They fake it. They may look human, but they are really wolves in sheep's clothing. They're predators. I asked Jack to go to couples counseling. We made it as far as the reception desk before he hightailed it out of there. Being cheated on has lasting effects. It can be challenging to engage with intimacy in a healthy way. Especially if a person has other challenges within themselves that they have yet to unpack. I was starting to feel a sort of rage with each discovery of infidelity. I had an intense urge to seek revenge. I had screamed and cried. I had cut up his clothes and threw things at him! Those types of reactions weren't enough to quell the rage that was welling up inside me. Revenge is a primitive impulse and I was feeling pretty primitive. When a person is scorned by his or her cheating spouse, more ancient parts of the brain like the amygdala and ventral striatum are the first to react. The amygdala notes the threat, while the ventral striatum notes how good it would feel to react. From there it's up to the prefrontal cortex, a more sophisticated region of the brain responsible for social behavior and self-control, to intervene. Based on my previous choices my prefrontal cortex seemed impaired. It was inevitable that I would carry out some type of revenge. I had a new weapon in my arsenal for revenge. I saw how deep I had hurt Jack when I was the one cheating. Fidelity was no longer considered a valuable trait for this marriage. No, one upmanship was the way to go. You stay faithful and so will I. But if you cheat, be prepared for the consequences. After, Jack saw how close I came to walking away with someone else, he was scared. He bought me a gold heart necklace and told me he would never hurt me again. I didn't believe him, but I still wanted us to be together. Shortly after choosing him over Jackie B. a former paramour popped into My Place Café. It was late and I was getting ready to close. In came the Irish heartbreaker, Johnny Donahue. I closed the bar and the two of us drank Dewar's scotch while reminiscing about the seventies. We made love that night on the barroom floor. Afterwards, I told him that this was just a one-night nostalgic situation. I didn't want to see him again. Johnny left and I drove home to Jessup. When I got there, I realized my heart necklace was missing. I hoped I'd find it the next day when I opened the bar. I needed to find it before Jack. I went in early and there it was on the floor

where Johnny and I made love. Crisis averted. Saturdays I would get a babysitter and hang out at the bar. That was one night that I could be sure that the money would make it to the cash register. Near closing time, in walked Jack's ex. The girl he had left to be with me, Laura. She was taller and built bigger than me, but that didn't intimidate me at all. I made conversation with her and was polite since she was there as a customer. She stayed till closing. The three of us left by the back door. Jack, then me and Laura behind me going down the four steps into the parking lot. Suddenly, she kicked me hard and I went flying. Now, we were having a physical altercation in my parking lot. She fought dirty too. At one point, she bit my breast. She was grabbing my hair and scratching like a feral cat. I went into survival mode. Seeing nothing but red, I grabbed her hair on each side of her face. I banged her head three times on the pavement. I could have killed her with that move, but I didn't. She gave up and struggled to get to her car, leaving behind a trail of curses. Lucky for her my pearl handed Smith & Wesson 38 stayed in my purse. I had won that fight. He might be a cheater but he was my cheater.

“There is hardly any activity, any enterprise, which is started with such tremendous hopes and expectations, and yet, which fails so regularly, as love.” Erich Fromm Chapter 27 Queen Sisyphus

One night after working a night shift and having quite a bit of vodka, I had a small accident. I was driving by a popular bar on Church Street. A car parked on the street opened their car door without a thought of oncoming traffic. I swerved and barely dinged the driver's side door. I kept going. I did not stop. When I got home, Jack started an argument about how late I was getting home. It got quite heated and he slapped me. My nine-year-old called the police. When they came and saw the powder blue cougar in my driveway, they asked if I had driven it in the last hour. Of course, I lied. A few days later I was served with a warrant for leaving the scene of an accident. Luckily, I had some political acquaintances. One of them, Tony Shawn was a regular at my bar. I asked him for a favor in getting me out of this jam. He must have been owed a favor up the ladder. He got me Attorney Thomas Munley, pro bono, who was an important lawyer at the time. Attorney Munley showed up on the day of my hearing in the Magistrate's office. He gave me a stern look and said, “You just sit there and let me do the talking”. He proceeded to approach the bench. No one could hear what he said to the Jessup magistrate. A few minutes later, he came back to me and said “Go home.” I was greatly relieved not to have repercussions for that accident. However, not relieved enough to stop drinking. I had not been able to save any money to buy the house in Jessup. I had to come up with \$5000. The bar had done nothing but further erode our marriage and my mental stability the last few years. I had noted when I bought My Place Cafe that the license was an unmovable one. That meant that it had to stay in that location. What I owned was the inventory, the goodwill and a piece of paper that allowed you to sell liquor and beer. I found a buyer right away. Many a drunk dreams of owning a bar. There were a few hoops to jump through. The Liquor Control Board had to do a background check on the potential buyer. The man who owned the building had to approve him for a rental lease of the actual space. Meantime, my brother decided to move back to Pennsylvania and needed the \$5000 immediately to relocate. I was to receive the money from selling the bar in a few days. I told my brother the deal was off and he should just move back in to his original home. I would leave in June when the kids were done with the school. I knew it was time “to get out of Dodge”, in this

case Jessup. I found a nice mobile home in Honor Park Moosic PA. Yes, the same mobile home park I had lived in with Bob. It had three bedrooms so the girls could each have their own bedroom. Also, The Riverside School District was excellent. The sale of the bar and the purchase of the mobile home finally coordinated, we moved to the next arena. I was able to get tuition from the State to attend a Vocational school and get certified as a Medical Assistant/Secretary. I had acquired a Associate's business degree in 1971. Combined with this vocational certification, I could obtain a very good job. The school was in Carbondale. Bob still tended to do vengeful things and we found out he had put sugar in the gas tank of my Cougar. Sugar is a scourge to car engines because it doesn't dissolve in gasoline. Sugar poured into a gas tank will get sucked into the fuel lines and begin clogging up parts of your engine's fuel system. That evil act resulted in having only one vehicle. Jack was supposedly looking for work. His opinion was that I should take the bus to school. He said he needed the car in case there was a job opportunity. I reluctantly agreed and began taking the bus to school. The bus stop was at the Kmart several blocks from our park. I would walk in all kinds of weather and get the bus. I always got the same bus driver. A brash obese comedian named Walter. Walter always flirted with me. I told him repeatedly that I was married. He still would ask me for my phone number every time I got on the bus. One day he pulled into the Kmart parking lot and I was the only passenger on the bus. The doors were locked and he said he wasn't going to let me go until I gave him my number. Exasperated, I said you give me your number. He did and I got off the bus. Jack would periodically get jobs doing roofing. In some town's men stand on a corner and hope to get picked for a day job. Well, in our town the gypsy contractors picked up workers in the neighborhood bar. So of course, this was a perfect excuse for Jack to go to local bars during the day. He also started buying guns. First a 308-caliber rifle to hunt deer. Then a 30-06 caliber also for deer hunting. I gave him a gun cabinet for Christmas that year. I wanted to be sure they would be locked up. He charged those two rifles on our Sugarman's credit card. Sugarman's was kind of like Walmart. He also bought a revolver. We would go target shooting, which I did enjoy. Jack also would make his own black powder bullets. Handloading is an involved process. Reloading shells manually needs your undivided attention. Nearly two-thirds of the cost of one round of ammunition is in that little brass case that gets left on the ground. Handloading means you can send more ammunition downrange for less money. I was glad he had these interests if it meant less drinking. He did seem content for a while. One day I went with him. He had just purchased the 30-06 rifle. I had previously shot the 308. I mistakenly assumed that the 30-06 would have less of a kick. It turned out just the opposite was true. Scientifically speaking, a 30-06 will have greater velocity than a .308, but a .308 still has less recoil and is therefore easier to shoot for most people. I aimed at the target and pulled the trigger and the scope hit me right between the eyes. I needed a few stitches. The scar at the top of my nose reminds me to never assume. We got a Black Labrador Retriever puppy and named her Babe. The girls loved her. I was starting to feel that maybe things could be good. My children were thriving in Moosic. I was almost done with my medical training and looking forward to a new career. Jack wasn't making much money. I started charging our groceries at Sugarman's. We were headed toward a financial cliff. I investigated filing bankruptcy. I found I could do that and keep my mobile home, the VW bus that Jack drove and possibly buy a small car for myself. I filed for bankruptcy and had to testify in bankruptcy court. Jack refused to testify, but the rules said both claimants had to be present. So, he grudgingly showed up and sat in silence. In Greek mythology Sisyphus was the king of Ephyra. He was punished for cheating death by being forced to roll an immense boulder up a hill only for it to roll down every time it neared the top, repeating this action for eternity. I was starting to feel just like Sisyphus. I was tired of being poor and doing everything alone. I had been working since I was a child and had little to show for my labors. I finished my schooling

and got hired at the Scranton Blood and Plasma Center. I was at the front desk and would do the finger prick and then test for the blood type. I had to start somewhere to get the needed medical experience. Downtown Scranton was not the ideal place to work. There were a lot of homeless people there. The plasma center paid for your donated blood. Every week the homeless alcoholic men would come in to donate. They were not bad people, just unlucky and homeless. I saw the good in many of them. Two of those homeless men, Roger and Stan, were always telling jokes and chatting as if everything was just peachy in their life. Winter was coming so I brought some of Jack's old plaid shirts in for them. We talked about everything while they waited to sell their plasma. One of the topics was The Scranton Iron Furnaces. It is a historic site that preserves the heritage of iron making in Pennsylvania. Four stone blast furnaces which were built in 1848. This is where these homeless men lived. Hard to believe, but I was about to step into another bizarre and senseless dimension. Chapter 28 Russian Roulette

There was something about Roger that was intriguing. A Vietnam vet who had seen some horrific things as a U.S. Marine. The veterans of that war faced much criticism after returning to the U.S. The American public's opinion was divided. Some criticized them for losing the war, while others criticized them for killing innocent civilians. In any case, they had to live with the consequences. Combine that with a dose of P. T.S.D. and you have a walking disaster. Many of these men turned to drugs and alcohol and lost everything, many becoming homeless. Stan and Roger were both vets. They were quite congenial and amusing personalities. I felt a great deal of compassion and connection with Roger. One day, he told me that they were going to get some beer and hang out at the Iron Furnaces. He asked if I would stop by and have a beer on my way home from work. I did and it was just Roger, Stan, and me. I had one beer and went home. I tended to be too open and friendly with people. I was never judgmental of anyone's circumstances. They all had a story and a path that would lead them to where they needed to be at the end of that journey. So, a couple of times I stopped on the way home and had a beer with the homeless guys. The YMCA and the Salvation Army allowed the homeless to take showers and get a meal. The two I had befriended always looked neat and clean. The only smell emanating from their bodies was alcohol. There came a day when it was just Roger and me at The Iron Furnaces. It started to rain so I let him sit in my car. He made a move to kiss me and I let him. After that kiss, I knew I could never go back to the Furnaces. However, it was too late to stop Roger from developing a romantic fixation on me. I was at work at the Plasma Center when FTD came in with a bouquet of roses for me. There was no card so I assumed they were from my husband. When I walked in with the flowers, Jack looked very angry. He demanded to know who they were from. I told him I thought they were from him because there was no card. He firmly reminded me that anytime he gave me flowers, it was in person. I told him I must have a secret admirer. Jack threw the flowers in the garbage straightaway. Of course, I now realized it was Roger. He started waiting for me after work. I didn't find him threatening, but I didn't want to lose my job. I told him I was afraid he would get me fired. Then he started waiting for me in the parking lot down the street. I firmly reminded him that I was married and didn't want to continue a clandestine affair. His reply was that if my husband met with him man to man, he would leave me alone. What was it with this man-to-man nonsense? As hard as it was to fathom, I knew he needed that showdown for closure. Telling Jack was not as hard as I thought it would be. After all, his cheating score card was more filled in than mine. He was upset and angry. But he knew how determined Jack B had been at the showdown at My Place. He had been very close to losing me then. He reluctantly agreed to the meeting. There was a bar downtown called The Dutchman. It was always quiet there. The agreed time was after I got off work, the three of us would meet. I walked in and Roger was already there. I went straight to the bar and

ordered a double vodka on the rocks. Jack came in and I made the introductions. Neither one raised their voices or threw a punch. Roger told Jack that I was an admirable and beautiful woman and should be valued as such. He wanted a promise that Jack would always be good to me. Jack told him in an annoyed manner that he knew how to take care of his wife. They even shook hands. We left the bar to walk to my car in the parking garage. Jack realized that Roger was following us. He turned around and said "Look buddy I have been very civilized so far, but if you need to get physical, I will be glad to oblige." Roger turned and walked away. Although an ambiguous one, I now had another infidelity check on my scorecard. I hadn't given Jack all the details, just enough to paint the picture I wanted. I had made it seem like all the advances had been by Roger. I certainly did not tell him about the kiss. Just an aside: Years later, I ran into Stan downtown. I almost didn't recognize him. He looked healthy, clean, and sober. He told me a woman named Betty took him in. She literally picked him out of the gutter. She brought him into her home and took care of him and grew to love him. They were now married and he was a re-born Christian. Miracles do happen. My relationship with Jack was a sick addiction. Waiting for a miracle in my life did not seem to be the road for me to stay on. Infidelity is a betrayal, one that is deeply traumatic. It's normal to experience a range of complicated thoughts and feelings in the aftermath. But what about serial infidelity? The pattern that Jack and I now appeared to have. There is a phenomenon called Hysterical Bonding. Juxtaposed with your agony and distress, lies the desire to reconnect, to be comforted, to win them back from their affair partner. The need to feel wanted can prompt a desire to reconnect sexually. This rekindled intimacy may feel new, different, or unlike sex you had in the past. That was us for a short while after every extramarital dalliance. Our other problems were still there, lack of money, drinking, abuse, and mistrust. Jack's drinking was just out of control. I liked to drink at home, but he would start right after work and not come home till late at night. One night, he came home drunk and demanded dinner. I had made stew in the crockpot. When he began to eat, he made a remark that it was cold. I threw the crockpot at him. My long-repressed anger was about to erupt. We couldn't go on like this. Jack got up from the table and walked to the gun cabinet. He took his .38 revolver out of the gun case. He started to berate me about my failings and past indiscretions. He told me I made him feel less of a man and that was what led to his cheating. He pushed me into the chair behind me. Then he held the gun to my head. I didn't even flinch. I had learned from my college gun classes that if the safety was on, the gun wouldn't fire. That was not the response he expected. He then put the gun in my hand and held it to his head. This time he took off the safety. He screamed at me to pull the trigger and I did. The gun had no bullets. He grabbed the gun and pushed me further back into the chair. He screamed "What if there were bullets in that gun?". I answered, "Then you would be dead". If there was a shred of sanity left in either of us that should have been the end of the marriage. But it wasn't. You can't stay in an abusive relationship and not be affected by it. As a normal, feeling human being, it is not possible to be in such a situation and not be affected profoundly by it. Jack was so much better at destroying my boundaries and pushing me beyond my limits than I was at keeping him in place. As always, there comes the straw that breaks the camel's back. Believe it or not I still needed one more betrayal to be the final catalyst. Chapter 29 The Last Straw

A wonderful opportunity materialized for me in the form of a new job. I interviewed and was hired by Dr. Sheldon a prominent dermatologist in Scranton. I was to be a front desk receptionist and medical secretary for his new partner Dr. Lois Zenker. My income was greatly increased. Still not enough to be a one income family, but perhaps able to avoid bankruptcy again. I was cross-trained to assist the doctor in small surgeries once a week. That was very exciting. Just to hand her the scalpel and dress the wound,

made me feel very professional. Jack had got a job working in a plant that made miniature golf courses. It paid pretty well, so I prayed that he would not lose this job. We would leave about the same time every morning after the kids left for school. We also got home at the same time. Surprisingly, he didn't get drunk as often. Jack had come from a big family. However, his mother had died and he didn't speak to his father. The matriarch of the family was Aunt Gloria Miller. She was a funny, unique woman who liked to drink Stegmaier beer. We would visit her and Jack's cousins Larry and twins Jimmy and Paul. The beer was awful but we would have a lot of laughs. Paul was dating a girl named Jeanne Atkinson at the time. Of course, we were all South Siders. Propinquity! Sometimes Paul and Jeanne would hang out in our yard and drink. I was more friends with Paul than her. He was good-natured and quite amusing. Spring 1986 I was actually holding some hope for our family. Until the day Paul came over unexpectedly for coffee. Jack was out in the woods target shooting (or so I thought), so I was alone. He said he needed to tell me something. Jack and Jeanne were having an affair. I was surprised since Jack was home so much more than in the past. Then he dropped the bombshell. Jack had been fired two weeks ago. When he left each morning, pretending to go to work, he was going to Jeanne's apartment. He usually got paid on the 15th and 30th of the month. How was he going to explain the lack of a paycheck? I have felt rage in the form of color many times in my life. Seeing black, when Bill Cerra tried to rape me, seeing red before I broke Bob's nose. This time the color was blinding white. I felt a white-hot rage come over me. I grabbed my car keys and headed to Jeanne's apartment. The blue VW bus was parked at the curb. Just as I pulled up, Jack was leaving and standing in the doorway kissing her goodbye. I ran up the stairs, pulled back my arm and slapped him with all the force in my small body. The deafening sound the slap made caused Jeanne to gasp. I turned to her and said "Shut up or you're next." She looked absolutely terrified. I ranted for a few minutes about what an ungrateful, scurrilous piece of shit he was. As I walked down the steps, I looked back at Jeanne and said, "You are not the first and you won't be the last." I then walked down to the corner bar to use the pay phone. I called Paul first and told him that I had caught them. I said if he didn't hear from me in an hour to come to her apartment. I felt murderous and it scared me. Paul said he would be right there and not to do anything crazy. Then I called the police to tell them my soon to be "ex" was stopping me from taking my vehicle. I even called Walter, the bus driver, to have him calm me down. When I went back outside, I confronted Jack and told him to say goodbye to his bus. The guys in the bar had realized something was going on and had come out to observe the unfolding drama. Jack moved towards one of the tires. I assumed it was to do damage so the vehicle would be undrivable. The guys walked closer and said "Hey buddy, don't do something stupid." The police showed up and I informed them I was the owner of the bus. Jack told them it was his. The policeman asked him who was on the title. I had him there. Paul arrived and was relieved to see that everyone was alive. He drove the VW home for me. The almost routine existence of cheating, lying and abuse had finally reached a limit that caused an earth-shattering reaction in my soul. Despite the terrible behavior the last six years, I had still felt that we were soul mates and someday would get our act together. This last straw blew the lid off all the old, unhealed wounds that I thought I had successfully locked away. I saw my inner child standing naked and bleeding, feeling raw and vulnerable. The camel's back may have been broken but its soul was primed for rebuilding, ready for whatever it took for deep healing. Chapter 30 Divorce PTSD

I never thought of my mother as a mirror, reflecting who I would become as an adult. Now I understand that she was my mirror. A broken mirror with a distorted vision. Her reflection showed me that a woman should take all kinds of abuse and not leave. That a woman could have a husband that fooled

around with other women and she would look the other way. {In my father's case probably men}. She demonstrated coldness, aloofness, and lack of interest in anything that I loved or excelled at. This was the basis for many of my choices. Her lack of guidance or attention resulted in my low self-esteem, unworthiness, abnormal loyalty, and fear. I did have a maternal mirror after all, one that was ambiguous and distorted. I grew up with a tempestuous example of family relationships. Lack of warmth, affection, praise, love, and encouragement. Without any reinforcement that I was good, special, or loved, I formed the impression that I was not good enough. This was the core belief that caused me to stay much too long in both of my marriages. I had to dig deep to find the belief that I needed to love myself. Enough was enough. The next day I packed up all of Jack's belongings including his guns. I dropped them off at Jeanne's apartment. I was able to sell the gun cabinet which helped with that month's bills. Bills that had included beer, cigarettes, and gun accessories now would also free up some money. I called the car lot where I had purchased the VW and convinced them to take the bus back in exchange for what was left on the balance of the loan. Jack started calling with the usual crying, cajoling, justification etc. I think he heard something different in my voice this time. I had my children, my home, my car, my job. I was alone, but in the best place in my life, a turning point. Jack's ex, Sharon and I agreed to still let the kids spend alternate weekends at each other's homes. I had grown very close to my stepchildren over the last seven years. She was a single Mom too, and it was nice to still have babysitting options in place. As soon as I was able to take a vacation day from work, I took the girls on a bus trip to Philadelphia. The first vacation in years. They were not at all sorry to see Jack leave. Especially since during one of his drunken tirades he had kicked our dog Babe. A couple of days later the dog died. That was more than enough reason for them to have hard feelings for him. Single again, but not looking for a relationship. My friend Sue and I started going to Pocono Downs every Friday. Pocono Downs had Harness racing. It is a form of horse racing in which the horses race at a specific gait (a trot or a pace). They usually pull a two-wheeled cart called a sulky occupied by a driver. Her family had some connection to horse training so we got to go to the stables and see the horses. There were two jockeys, we got friendly with Bobby Williams and Ari Reynolds. We would have a drink after the races and soon we were invited to the weekly Jockey party. They would discuss who the three best horses were that week. Then they would speculate who should win, place and show. They let the girlfriends place the bets. My jockey never gave me money to bet for him. He was not that stupid. He wasn't going to take the chance of getting caught and losing his career as a jockey. He would just give me the heads up before the race so that I could bet if I wanted to. I didn't bet a lot but I was glad to have the extra money when I won. Bobby told me before each race that he was in to come down to the paddock. If he gave me the signal then I should bet his horse to win first place. Now there was always the factor of the unknown. I would bet to win, place or show. Each time I happened to go to the same cashier to place my bet. After a few weeks, this cashier said "I realized who your boyfriend is. You don't need money at my window. Just give me your bet and I will give you the ticket." I still only bet modest amounts. That was a nice scam for a few months. Jockeys move on from racetrack to racetrack. Eventually Williams was on his way to another racetrack. It had been an exciting relationship but one with no future. My friend Sue continued her relationship and married Reynolds. I know they had a child but then I lost track of her. Years later I heard they had gotten divorced. I was enjoying my job at the dermatologist's office. I felt a sense of pride being Dr. Zenker's assistant. It was summer and I usually sent my girls to St. Andrews Day Camp. This year they begged me to let them stay home. They were 12 and 13. They wore me down and I reluctantly agreed. What a mistake. They would be bickering at each other and call me at work to settle the dispute. I told them do not call unless it is an emergency. I also told them no one was allowed inside

our home while I was at work. A neighbor called me and said I thought you should know what's going on. Some boys have taken the screen down and are climbing in the window. I called and told my girls that the police were on their way. I said that I had reported that there was a break-in. Of course, I had not called the police but they believed me and so did the boys. Everyone cleared out. It was very stressful being a single working Mom. To de-stress, I got in the habit of stopping for a drink after work. A place called the Nativity Club. A friend from the El Dorado days, James Minelli, was the club manager. All I needed was to show up and he would buy my drinks. The bartender was a loud Irishman, Jerry Brier. My first impression was that he was brash and obnoxious. An old schoolmate of mine came in and was surprised to see me. He said, "hey remember me, we went to junior high together?" This Brier guy yelled, "Hey, I went to school with you too!" I dismissed his declaration with a contemptuous glare. My friend, Mr. Minelli liked being seen with arm candy. He was at least 30 years older than me and completely harmless. I let him take me to dinner a few times and buy the drinks at the club. There was never anything sexual. If I had had sex with him, it probably would have killed him. I was in a place where I wanted to use men not have an intimate relationship with anyone. Both Jack Calvey and Johnny Donahue had broken my heart. I had built a wall of ice around the core of it. No one would ever be allowed to delve into my heart and soul again. Another place that was on the bar hopping list was Tony and Mary's. This was a real dive but the drinks were cheap. My sister and I would go there knowing we would be the best-looking chicks in the place. Our competition were straggly haired, burnt out female drunks. When we had no money, I would call her and say "Let's go slumming". Guys would buy us drinks just to talk to two attractive women. I had got friendly with two guys there, George Parker and Pete Nichols. They were smart and funny. Just some people to hang out with. Post-divorce drinking seemed like a harmless distraction, but it can, lead you down a road you're not prepared to ride. "A history of past trauma is a risk factor for developing PTSD post-divorce. In people with PTSD from past trauma," says psychiatrist Dr. Susan Edelman, "the breakup of a relationship can led to worsening symptoms of post-traumatic stress and psychological well-being." I had a lot of traumas in my life. But I also had the will to keep living life no matter what it would generate.

"Life is inherently risky. There is only one big risk you should avoid at all costs, and that is the risk of doing nothing." Denis Waitley Chapter 31

A Slow Hand

The divorce from Jack went smoothly. However, Jack showed up at the courthouse which surprised me. He asked my lawyer if he was sleeping with me. That was a ridiculous question. Then he said to the divorce lawyer: "What if I told you, I had a gun on me?" The lawyer replied, "I'd say that's pretty stupid. If you pulled out a gun, one of the many laws enforcement officers present would shoot you." This was before they had metal detectors at the courthouse. He admitted that he didn't have a gun. The only thing to contest in the divorce settlement was the mobile home. He signed it over right there in the hallway of the Lackawanna County Courthouse. I wanted to celebrate that night but none of my girlfriends were available. I decide to go out alone. I picked Chicks Country Western bar for several reasons. It was in South Side, familiar territory. I would probably know everyone there. Also, it wasn't Jack's type of bar so I wouldn't run into him. The doorman was a friend of my sister's named Porky. He was several years younger than me. He told me I didn't have to pay the cover charge. He got me a drink and a chair next to him at the door. The last thing I needed was another oversized bouncer in my life. I decided to sit with him till I finished my drink. A guy walked in that I had never seen before. There was a

good reason for that. He had just been in prison for a few years. He was now on parole. His name was Ronnie Vaughn and he was very attractive. He also had that certain vibe, "je ne sais quoi" as they say in France. He had an elusive aura that made him stand out in a crowd. The look that he gave me said he was interested too. This bar had a dance floor and a band. The band started playing Deep River Woman by Lionel Richie. Porky asked Ronnie if he would watch the door so he could dance with me. Before anyone could blink, I grabbed Ronnie's hand and said, "I want to dance with you." When he put his arms around me and we started to dance, the chemistry was obvious to both of us. When the dance ended, he took my hand and led me down a back hallway. Once hidden from prying eyes, he kissed me. His kiss was tender and slow. A kiss that conveyed deep desire yet had a reverence about it. A kiss that said, I know you're not a one-night stand. There was a seldom used side door. We slipped out that way so Porky would not see us. A half a block away was Tony and Mary's. One of the bartenders lived upstairs and was having a party. We decided to go there. Gary would surely have some pot among other party favors. We got there and a joint was passed around. Ronnie passed since he was randomly tested for drugs. Later, after Chicks closed, I walked Porky. He was not pleased to see us there. We did not have sex that night. One of my rules through the years was never to have sex on the first date. I was counting this as a date. The summer of 1986, I thought I would just be enjoying dating and being single. However, Ronnie and I became a couple fast. He would be waiting for me across the street, outside the building where I worked. The first time, all my female coworkers checked him out through our seventh-floor window. They thought he was very handsome. When we finally did have sex, I found out just how transcendent physical contact could be. He was slow and methodical. In my mind I would hear that song by the Pointer Sisters, "Slow Hand".

I want a man with a slow hand I want a lover with an easy touch I want somebody who will spend some time Not come and go in a heated rush I want somebody who will understand When it comes to love, I want a slow hand That was Ronnie Vaughn. He worked nights so we could only see each other two nights a week. I would sometimes meet him for his lunch break and bring him food. He told me about his misspent youth and going to jail for the crime of burglary. He said that the time he spent in prison was soul changing. He vowed to walk the straight and narrow from then on. October was my birthday. He told me to make sure to meet him for his lunch break in the parking lot where he worked. I did and he greeted me with a very sweet kiss. He handed me a little blue box. Inside were the most beautiful opal earrings. I was impressed that he would buy me such expensive jewelry and that he did the research to find out my birthstone. November, I invited him to my family home for Thanksgiving. I thought we were at a point in our relationship where he could handle meeting my crazy family. He said he would come but then at the last minute he came up with a lame excuse. I then had him over to meet my girls. He was very awkward around them. I knew that he once had a serious relationship prior to ours. I also knew that him not wanting kids is what led to its demise. The following week I called him from work to see when we were getting together. He broke up with me over the phone. He used the same line as Johnny Donahue, "It's not you, it's me." I was devastated to the point that I had to leave work. The James Bond personality, confident, mysterious, and quiet was what had attracted me to him in the first place. However, I now realized that also included a fear of commitment. Ronnie had begun to melt the wall of ice I had protecting my heart. But it was a just a romantic fairy tale. I berated myself for letting feelings of love seep in again. I should have known that this heartbreak was inevitable. I was 38 and had three major heartbreaks. No matter if you are sixteen or sixty, heartbreak is equally excruciating and leaves you raw and feeling violated. The lesson learned was that I needed more than a

wall of ice to guard my heart.

Chapter 32

Bartender's Advice

I was confounded and confused about the breakup with Ronnie. In retrospect, I realize meeting my kids had been the decisive moment for him. He realized it was a package deal and he did not want something that complicated. I turned to my old friend alcohol to ease the pain. During the week, I would drink at home since I had to work the next day. But on weekends I was drowning my sorrows in the worst dives in the city. I was not looking for male company, just cheap booze.

One Friday night, I was drinking with my buddies Pete and George in Tony and Mary's. Pete had a very jealous girlfriend named Linda who did not know me. When she came in and saw him sitting next to a strange woman, she became enraged. She picked up a bottle of beer and hurled it. I am not sure if it was meant for me or Pete, but it hit me. It hit the right side of my forehead. Hard enough that I almost lost consciousness. Someone, ran down to Chick's bar to get Ronnie. It was pretty much known that he still cared for me. He came in and I called the cops. I filled out a report. I knew her name and I had witnesses, so she was in trouble. I should have gone to an emergency room but instead I went to Ronnie's apartment. The kids were with my parents so I stayed the night. The next day I got a call from this Linda. She apologized and said she was aiming for Pete. Well, that didn't help my throbbing temple. She offered to compensate me in the amount of \$200. I agreed to meet her at Kmart. I took the money and promised to drop the police complaint. I knew I was capable of the same rash behavior if the circumstances were right. The following weekend, I went to Chick's alone hoping to bump into Ronnie. He never came in that night. As I sat there, a guy walked in who I was not acquainted with. He came right over with a shit-eating grin on his face and asked if he could buy me a drink. His name was Art Cronin. He was a short, bearded Irishman. He told me I looked like Adrienne Barbeau from the TV show Maude. I didn't tell him that he looked like a leprechaun. I didn't care that he found me attractive. All I was interested in that night was someone to buy my Dewar's, which he bought a lot of. It was the end of November. Nobody wants to be alone for the holidays so I let Art think that he had a chance with me. He loved my kids and they adored him. He was funny and generous. He worked for the Scranton Times. He got them jobs delivering papers. He would even pick them up and drive them to their stops so they could get back in plenty of time for school. Whenever the opportunity materialized, Ronnie and I were still having sex. I don't think the term "fuck buddies" had been coined yet but that was the best

description for what we were doing. It was clandestine sex. Publicly I was Art's girlfriend. One night, Art just showed up at my trailer with pizza. I had not invited him over. I was in no mood to fake affection. I belligerently stated I was upset because I didn't even have anything to drink. He gave me \$20. I flew out the door and drove to the liquor store where I bought a bottle of Scotch. Then I continued to the Nativity Club and ordered a drink. That insufferable bartender Jerry was behind the bar. As I sipped my drink, I began to vent my frustration with men. Art was a saint with my kids but the idea of sex with him made my skin crawl. Ronnie on the other hand was good in bed but a confirmed bachelor. With the wisdom of Solomon, Jerry opined, "You should marry Art and screw Ronnie on the side." I was very offended by his crude and unsolicited advice. I bought a six pack and returned home. The end of November was my 20th High School reunion. I didn't want to bring Art but I didn't want to walk in alone. I had always stayed friendly with all my exes' families. Probably because the ex-husbands were such assholes. I imagined they saw me as saintlike for putting up with them as long as I did. I had graduated with Bob's sister Maryann Hoppel. I called her and she said she would be thrilled to go to the reunion with me. I had nothing nice to wear. I browsed the Globe Store downtown to find something appropriate. I found this beautiful V cut emerald green sweater. At the time my hair was colored red. I knew that green sweater with my hazel eyes and crimson hair would make quite a statement. The price however was out of my league. I bought it anyway. The night of the reunion, I tucked the price tag into my bra with intentions of returning it the next day. I did get more than a few admiring looks the night of the Central High School Class of 1966 Reunion. I looked for my place card and found that I was at a table with all couples. As I drank my scotch, who should approach me but that loudmouth from the Nativity Club. I asked him what he was doing there. He said, "I told you we went to high school together. We were in some of the same classes too." When it was time for dinner, I noticed he was also sitting alone. When the dance music started, he asked me to dance. I was supposed to meet some friends of mine at Valentino's in Dickson City. I asked him if he wanted to go and have a drink with me. Of course, he said yes. I don't think I ever heard no to that question in my entire life. We had fun dancing and drinking with my friends Debbie Williams and her sister. Debbie was Gary Williams ex. His apartment was where Ronnie and I had our first date. The population of Scranton might have been 80,000 but it was still a small-town environment. About 2 AM we went to Tony Harding's for breakfast. There were three or four diners that stayed open for the drinking crowd. This diner was one of the most popular. After our meal, Jerry walked me out to my car. We were both parked in Harding's back lot. I said I had a wonderful time and jumped in my car. I didn't give him time to kiss me. I had enough men in my life and he was married. Christmas Eve, I saw my parents, visited Aunt Gloria and cousins Larry, Jimmy and Paul Miller and had Christmas Dinner with Art's family. I had known one of Art's brothers when I was a teenager. They were delighted that Art was involved with me. Of course, they didn't know how expendable I felt he was. New Year's Eve he celebrated with me and my friends at Valentino's in Dickson City. After midnight, the band played a romantic song. Art asked me to dance and I told him I needed some air. I went to the pay phone and called Ronnie. Happy New Year! Chapter 33 The ScoreBoard

Here's a recap of 1986-1987 in case you are keeping score. Jack fails to steal home base. Thrown out of the game with a second and final divorce. The jockey went back to Kentucky, so out at third base. Cousin Paul is still my drinking buddy and pinch hitter. Art the leprechaun is at first base and is very popular with my kids. Supposedly I struck out with Ronnie but we are still having sex. Jerry B. the bartender is waiting in the dugout, flirting, and lending me his ear whenever I feel like venting. Valentine's Day, Art took me to a very romantic restaurant and after dinner proposed. The ring was quite beautiful so I

accepted. It was a pragmatic decision on my part. Realistically, none of my choices for the past 20 years had worked out. I had wanted to have a career as High School English teacher that was thwarted by my parents. I thought Jack Calvey was my soulmate (twice) and that proved to be an unsound perception. The urge to marry and have children resulted in the toxic imprisonment with Bob and the subsequent stalking when I tried to break free. Letting my guard down and being vulnerable with Ronnie Vaughn resulted ultimately in heartbreak. I was growing weary and jaded. Maybe Jerry was right, marry Art and have Ronnie on the side. The only problem was that I never enjoyed cheating nor aspired to being the other woman. At heart, I was still that good Catholic girl that believed in the Ten Commandments. Although excommunicated by the Church due to divorce, still trying to play by their rules. I was still stopping by the Nativity Club after work almost every day. The girls were 12- and 13-year-old latchkey kids. Jerry was trying to convince me that we could have a platonic relationship. How many plates could I keep spinning? His friends repeatedly supported his case. They would tell me that his wife was a drapery drunk, slang for women who drank at home alone. I heard how the marriage was not a good one. However, calling his wife, a drunk was like the pot calling the kettle black. St. Patrick's Day, I stopped in at Nativity as usual. I had on my white nurses' uniform and a pin that said "Kiss My Irish Ass". Paul had met me for a drink although I did the buying as he was stone broke. The door opened and in came Jerry. He wasn't bartending today since he was Irish and therefore it was a sacred holy day. His full-time job was teaching Biology at Scranton Central High School, our alma mater. I told Paul he could leave. At least Jerry was able to pay for my drinks.

The girls were having a sleepover at a friend's house so I had no curfew. I don't remember much about that night but I do remember the next morning. I woke up to find Jerry in my bed. The girl's sleepover was at another mobile home in Honor Park so the girls could walk in at any time. I woke him and rushed him out the back door. After breaking all my self-imposed rules, I decided I would see Jerry again. However, we would not sleep together. We would try his platonic approach. The next day I stopped at Art's house unannounced, something I had never done before. After knocking loudly for more than a few minutes, I found that the door was unlocked. When I walked in, I discovered Art passed out drunk on the kitchen floor. I couldn't wake him up. He looked and smelled as if he had been on a drinking binge for a few days. I left feeling disgusted. My business-like decision to marry him became a nonstarter. A few days later, I called him and asked him to meet me for an early dinner. We were sitting at a table in the middle of this very busy restaurant. The former Mayor of Scranton, Gene Peters came in. His entrance acquiring the room's full attention. A few minutes later, he stopped at our table and slipped me his phone number. Attracting men had never been my problem. My problem was never attracting good men. After our entrée, we ordered coffee. I told Art that it was not going to work out between us. He asked me if I was going to give him back the ring. I had purposely left the ring at home. I arrogantly replied, "A gentleman wouldn't ask for the ring back", as I threw my napkin at him and left the restaurant. I had once again made a decision based upon "Situational Ethics". The justifying viewpoint being I still had to care of my children and the ring would buy a lot of groceries. Chapter 34