

# CHAPTER 1

---

## The Arrest

There was a loud peremptory knock on her apartment door. Whether you have ever heard it before, in the Western world, everyone recognized that knock as the police. A loud voice said, “Police. Open this door, Ms. Lillehammer. We are here to talk to you.”

Sheila’s heart sank. That sense of guilt that lurked in every soul when so confronted rushed to the surface. She knew immediately what this was about. Her life was over. In panic, she thought of trying to run and hide. But where? She wearily got up and unlocked the door. *So this is what it comes to?* she thought. *It’s the end of everything.*

It was her night off, and that evening, she had been sitting by herself in a darkened room, not knowing what had happened to John, her lover and roommate who had vanished the day before and whom she had been unable to contact. He had not shown up at his worksite and was not answering his phone.

As a former alcoholic, his sudden disappearance likely meant he had “gone out,” as they say in AA—he had started drinking again. She was unutterably sad and weary. She had just finished listening on her phone to the YouTube video of that little girl Kaylee Rogers singing “Hallelujah” with the other little children. She loved that recording and that earnest little girl singing beautifully, especially the line “that rugged cross was my cross too.”

*How true,* she thought as she picked up and then put down an unopened 40 oz bottle of vodka, which she had bought that afternoon in her despair.

*Just because John is gone, she thought. I must not use that as an excuse to start drinking again. Where did life go? It was not as if mine was that wonderful ever. What was it I read about Coleridge? "With hope like a fiery column before thee, the dark pillar not yet named. Samuel Tayler Coleridge, logician, metaphysician, bard." Same issue. His problem was cocaine. Mine are PTSD and booze. Oh Jesus, John is gone. Coleridge was right, he knew.*

Alone alone, all, all alone  
Alone on a wide wide sea  
So lonely twas that God himself  
scarce seemed there to be.

Sheila thought back to the bitterness of her childhood—a father who seemed to love his four other older daughters but seemed to have little time for the youngest, an unintentional, somewhat unloved afterthought. A man who valued respectability above all, he thought of himself as a good man. He worked hard and brought in reasonable money to support the family. He had no great vices. He never struck his wife or children, but he was remote. At times, her shyness had rendered her inarticulate. She tried desperately to please him, again and again, but he never seemed to notice or care. When she made a mistake or sometimes even when she tried to help, he was harshly critical. Perhaps he thought she was not very bright.

The hurt was slowly replaced by anger that gradually built up in her. Because of his indifference to her, she began to think of ways to hurt him. She could not do it physically, but suppose one of his daughters turned out to be a bad girl? He would be mortified. That would get his attention. As she began to mature, her resentment progressively reached the stage when she was ready to do something, anything, to hurt or embarrass her father, and eventually, she thought she knew exactly how to do that.

She knew she was pretty. Her friends talked about who was fooling around with whom, but she did not know any boy well enough to ask one. The boyfriend of one of her much older sisters came to the house one day. The family was out for the afternoon, and she was on her own. Sheila opened the door and asked him in, telling him that her sister would be back soon. Her sister had told her that she had been drinking with the boy. They were both eighteen and, therefore in Canada, legally too young, but that had not stopped them. Sheila, thinking that that would make her

seem more grown up, took a couple of her father's beers from the fridge and gave one to the boy. He popped it open and took a drink. She copied him and had a drink herself. It tasted foul, but she drank some more to show how grown up she was.

He had been staring at her chest. Her breasts had recently begun to develop, so she casually opened her blouse further to give him a better view. She leaned forward, and he cupped one of her breasts with his hand. "That feels nice," he said. He placed her hand on his crotch. She felt the erection. He squeezed her hand around it and groaned in pleasure.

"When will your sister get back?"

"The whole family is gone for the afternoon. We are here alone," she said, fondling him. "We could have some fun."

"Where? Here?"

"My bedroom upstairs."

"Let's go."

He followed her up the stairs into her room. She turned to face him and sat on the bed. They both undressed hurriedly. She lay back with her legs spread, and he guided himself into her. She felt him enter, then she felt something else. He pushed harder. It hurt, and she groaned. He rammed himself into her. She felt pain, then something gave way, and he buried himself in her. He continued thrusting in and out of her. It hurt with every stroke, but she said nothing other than groaning, which seemed to excite him further. He suddenly pulled out of her, and she heard him gasp.

"Wow!" he said. "That was real good. We should do that again when your sister is not about."

He lay back beside her with his hands behind his head, but a few minutes later, he again began to stroke and squeeze her breasts. After some minutes, he became hard again and again entered her. This hurt, and she groaned with each stroke. As before, this seemed to excite him, and he plunged away for a long time before pulling out again.

"Jeez," he said. "Awesome, but I had better go before your family gets back." He dressed and left.

*Well, that's done,* she thought. That was the first of many. She wanted her father to know but was not sure how to make it obvious to him that his daughter was not a good little girl. She had no hesitation in giving herself to almost anyone who asked. She became very popular with boys. Then she missed her period. She did not know what had happened. It was another two weeks before she realized that she was pregnant.

She told her mother, who was horrified that a sixteen-year-old daughter of hers was pregnant. Her mother told her father who was even more horrified. They knew that that was happening in society and that abortions were now commonplace, but they were Roman Catholic, and abortion went against all her father's principles. But a sixteen-year-old daughter of his having a baby was even worse. He was furious with her and fell into despair. He ranted and raved and threatened to have the boy responsible jailed for statutory rape. She told him that there had been many men and she was not sure who the father was. He raged at her, calling her a whore and a slut. He could not understand how any daughter of his could turn out this way.

*Well, she thought, at least you now notice I exist. How do you like that? Maybe you now wish you had spent more time with me and been a little nicer. Have the baby, have an abortion—I don't care. It's your fault.*

She had the abortion. She was never sure how she felt about that. Later in life, she certainly had regrets; but at the time, it seemed the most reasonable thing to do. She did learn her lesson and from then on took birth control pills. A few months later, she had pain and discharge. She was still too young to go to her doctor on her own, so her mother took her to her family doctor. Tests showed she had gonorrhoea. Her mother was mortified. Her father was so angry he threatened to kick her out of the house.

His anger and disgust with her fueled her rebellion that continued until eventually, fed up with being lectured, she dropped out of school, left home, and after being on the streets for some time, joined a commune where she and others were proponents of free love. Finally realizing the futility of that life, she went to the States, became a nurse, and subsequently joined the US military.

That tortuous road had led to Afghanistan. There, she thought she had found happiness with John, a military surgeon who also had his problems. A terrible mistake in Afghanistan led to her discharge from the military, then to a period of aimless addiction to drugs and alcohol. Eventually she managed to pull herself up and recover from that, and she and the surgeon were reunited and were settling down, but suddenly he had disappeared. And now this knock at the door meant that she was looking at imprisonment, possibly for life, because she had done a few mercy killings in the old age home where she was working. The despair almost overwhelmed her.