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## CHAPTER ONE

# Valley of WEEPING

*When they walk through the Valley of Weeping it  
will become a place of springs where pools of blessing  
and refreshment collect after rains!*

—PSALM 84:6 (TLB)

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE the happiest time of my life . . . the summer after my senior year in college . . . a time for new beginnings. I was engaged to be married and preparing to start my first “real job.” Things were working out exactly as I had planned.

In early June, just days before I was to begin my new job, I spent a leisurely afternoon with friends by the pool. It was a typical Texas summer day, 95 degrees and muggy. We were celebrating the end of one journey and the beginning of another. As the afternoon wore on, we made evening plans, and the pool emptied.

My roommates had left earlier that day to go out of town for the weekend, so I went back to my apartment alone. Our apartment had two entrances, one a sliding glass door in the back, facing the pool, and the other a front door, facing the parking lot.

As I entered my back door and walked toward the stairs near the front of the apartment, I noticed that someone had locked the

front door, which was unusual because we never locked the door except at night. *I don't remember locking this.* A tingling sensation ran through me. You know that feeling you get when something does not feel right? Forgetting it rather quickly, I slowly climbed the stairs to the second floor, daydreaming, my mind flooded with memories of the last four years.

When I reached the top of the stairs, a man wearing a bandana over his face with holes cut out for his eyes and mouth confronted me. The stranger was dressed in long pants, tennis shoes, and a T-shirt. He wore leather hunting gloves and wielded a large knife with a thick blade. *This isn't real. Surely this is a joke. Who would do such a thing?* It was the ice-cold stare behind his piercing blue eyes that jolted me into reality. He told me not to make a

sound or he would cut me. He grabbed me by the arm and told me he would kill me if I did not do everything he said. This was no joke.

*In those moments,  
everything within me died.*

Every move calculated, he walked me back down the stairs. At first, I felt relief because I thought he was hiding from the police or wanted money.

Within seconds, I knew he had other plans. The masked man dragged me around the apartment, locking every door and window and closing every blind. As we stood in front of the sliding glass door overlooking the pool, I pled in my mind for the few friends left at the pool to glance my way and see this masked stranger holding a knife to my throat. The closing of that last blind snuffed out any hope I had of rescue. He ordered me to take the phone off the hook and pushed me back toward the stairs. As we passed the front door, I reached for the lock. Before I could turn it, he grabbed me and threw me against the wall. He pressed the knife against my throat. The cold blade touched my skin. My captor then pushed me up the stairs, still holding the knife at my neck.

As we reached the top of the stairs, I turned and begged the

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man to leave, promising not to tell anyone. I told him that I had no idea who he was and would have no way of identifying him. He shoved me into my bedroom, ordering me to shut up and not say another word. I knew now there was no escape; I was his captive. He stared at me and told me to undress with my back toward him. He forced me onto the bed. He placed a washcloth over my face and kept it there the entire time. I remember feelings of complete humiliation, shame, and vulnerability as if it were yesterday.

I begged him to leave. Terror filled my body, unlike anything I have ever experienced. My captor dug the knife into my neck. His face inches from mine, he whispered, "Say another word, and I will kill you."

In those moments, everything within me died. I was an empty tomb. I experienced pain so deep that it seared my soul. He touched me all over. He forced himself into me over and over again. Involuntary cries came from my mouth, and with each cry, my attacker grew angrier. Finally, he climbed off me. *Could this nightmare really be over?* He stood up, zipped his pants, leaned in close to my face, and whispered with an intense evil, "I know where you live. If you tell anyone, I will return, and I will kill you." He told me not to move until I had counted to 100. He continued to threaten me as he walked out of the room and down the stairs.

I lay on my bed, counting to 100, naked, weeping, not knowing if the masked man had actually left the apartment. I was terrified that he was tricking me by waiting downstairs. Finally, I mustered the courage to get off the bed. I wrapped my towel around me and walked down the stairs. With each step, I grew more and more anxious. When I reached the last step, I felt a surge of relief, flung open the now-unlocked front door, and ran out.

For a moment, I stood alone outside, sobbing. *Where would I go? Who should I tell? Would he come back? Why me? What did I do?* Finally, barefoot, shaking, and holding the towel tightly around me, I ran, ran as if my life depended on it, to my fiancé's apartment. He lived a few doors down and around the corner. I burst through the

door. Words poured from my mouth, but I made no sense. Hearing the words *mask* and *knife*, Monty and his roommates raced out the door toward my apartment. However, I knew the masked man was gone. I had waited too long. When they came back, Monty wrapped his arms around me, but I felt nothing. I did not want anyone to touch me or hold me ever again. They told me that I needed to call the police. However, the rapist's words, his threats to return and kill me if I told anyone, reverberated in my mind.

After I called the police, Monty took me to the local hospital emergency room. When we arrived, we walked up to the triage desk. The receptionist asked, "May I help you?"

"Yes," I replied, "I need to see a doctor."

"What are you here for?" she asked matter-of-factly.

As those words rolled off her tongue, I hesitated and then spoke three words I never thought I would utter: "I was raped." As the words came out, shame and humiliation surged through my body.

We waited for what seemed an eternity. A nurse finally came and escorted me to a cold, sterile examination room. She introduced herself and asked me to wait a few more moments while she went to retrieve the rape kit. As I waited, I recounted the minutes before I climbed the stairs of my apartment. *Why didn't I stop when I saw the locked door? Why didn't I try harder to escape when he took me back downstairs? Why didn't I fight back?* The questions flooded my mind, one after another. I felt as if I could not breathe.

The nurse returned, bringing me back to reality. She placed a large piece of crinkly white paper on the floor and instructed me to stand on it and remove all my clothing. The paper would capture any evidence the perpetrator may have left behind, she explained. Then, handing me a white gown, she instructed me to put it on and to lie down on an exam table covered with the same crinkly paper. It was cold against my skin.

Next, the nurse asked me to raise my knees and place my feet in the stirrups. She proceeded with a painful and complicated exam,

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further humiliating me by pulling vaginal hairs and taking samples. Next, she initiated a barrage of questions, asking me to explain detail by detail what had occurred over the previous terror-filled hours. As I recounted the events, it seemed like a dream, as if I were living outside my body. *Is this real? Am I really here in this room? Where is he? What is he doing? Is he thinking about me?*

When the exam was complete, there was a knock at the door. My heart pounded as I watched a male doctor walk into the room. He began another lengthy interrogation. Quietly I answered his questions, explaining for the third time the opening scene of this nightmare. The young doctor outlined the steps I needed to take from this point and what to look for in case the man had STDs or in the event I might become pregnant. *Pregnant!* I had not even gone there in my mind. I felt myself slipping away. It was all happening so fast, and I could not cope. I wanted to leap off the table and run, run and never look back.

After the doctor completed his exam, the police officer assigned to my case came into the room and informed me that I had to return to my apartment to meet with the CSIs. When we arrived, I encountered another round of probing questions, once again reliving my nightmare. One of the officers asked me to fill out an incident report. This required that I write down the entire incident. "Every detail," he said. "Leave nothing out." I could not even hold the pen, so my dear friend Karen wrote while I recounted every horrid moment. I watched them take my things, one by one: my bathing suit, comforter, sheets, towel, and washcloth. Black fingerprint dust covered everything in the apartment. After the crime team left, I collapsed, weeping, wondering when I would wake up from this nightmare. Though surrounded by friends who cared for me and wanted to help, I felt utterly alone.

*Fear became  
my driving force.*

Total exhaustion set in. I do not remember the rest of the day.

I do know that I never wanted to return to my apartment . . . ever! All I wanted was to start my day over again . . . but this time when I saw the locked door, I would run and never climb those stairs.

In the days that followed, no one around me knew what to say or how to act . . . even my closest friends. Everyone had the best of intentions, but no words comforted me. I remember walking across campus and people quickly looking away when they caught my gaze. It was so painful that I felt even more isolated.

That single hour forever changed my life. My dreams were shattered. The joyful anticipation of my wedding and life as a newlywed vanished. Where there once had been happiness, there was hopelessness. Endless tears filled my days. The nights were worse, sleepless and filled with terror. Nightmares and frightening reruns of my rape permeated the few hours of sleep I did get. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw his masked face, his blue eyes, and the knife. In my dreams, blood covered the knife. Often I watched television all night to avoid closing my eyes. The rising sun, which had always brought the hope and excitement of a new day, now illuminated my tearstained face. I had the overwhelming feeling that I could not endure another day. I was emotionally drained and physically exhausted. I reached the desperate place of wanting to end my life. It was simply too difficult to live each day in the fear that imprisoned me.

My life before the rape felt as if all my dreams were coming true. I could have been the popular girl in the typical made-for-TV movie who had it all. I had pledged Kappa Kappa Gamma, which had blessed me with an incredible circle of friends. I dated a handsome fraternity boy who played football for Baylor. My peers voted me a Baylor Beauty and a Homecoming Princess my senior year. I graduated with honors. To top it all off, I was engaged to my handsome football player, and I was days away from starting my first job. Baylor University's Development office had selected me along with two other graduates for a twelve-month paid internship to serve as ambassadors for the university and travel the coun-

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try representing the school. Life truly was perfect.

My life after the rape felt completely different. Fear became my driving force. I was afraid to be alone, even within the confines of my own home: afraid to enter empty rooms, afraid to climb to the top of any staircase, afraid to be anywhere alone with a man other than Monty, and afraid to sleep because of the nightmares. Fear consumed my every waking moment. For months after my rape, I refused to take a shower unless someone sat in the bathroom with me from beginning to end.

I also developed an irrational fear of men, especially those who fit the profile of my rapist. I spent days, months, even years after my rape looking for men who fit his description. *Could he be the one?* I remember one cocktail party in particular. I was mingling with friends. Across the room, I saw a young man about the same height, weight, and eye color of the man who raped me. I immediately froze, unable to function. *Could it be him?* I knew this particular man had been at Baylor when I was there. I made my girlfriend take me home immediately. I could not be in the same room with him . . . just in case he was the one. These kinds of irrational thoughts controlled my life.

Would I ever recover from this violation? It felt as if I would live in this prison for the rest of my life. Both the doctor and the police officers strongly suggested I meet with a rape counselor. I avoided doing so for as long as I could, but I finally succumbed. I first visited a psychologist who seemed only to talk in circles and to ask many questions without providing answers. Not long after, I attended a group session at the local rape crisis center with other rape victims. Most of the women in this group were in various stages of depression. They only added to my sense of hopelessness. *Was this what my life would be? Would I be like them?* After one visit, I never returned.

I longed to hear something—anything—from God. I was so angry with Him. Night after night I lay in bed, tears soaking my pillow. *Why didn't You protect me? Why didn't You warn me? Why did*



*You abandon me? Why would You let this happen to me?* Friends, especially Christians, would say to me, “God has a purpose. God will bring good out of this.” I knew they meant well, but how could they utter such ridiculous statements? No good would ever come from this! What possible purpose could there be for the unspeakable acts that a vile man committed against me?

I was in a deep valley unlike any other I had ever experienced. I felt so alone. No one, not a single soul, understood the depths of my pain and my despair. No one knew the terror I lived with each day. No one knew . . . my loneliness, my helplessness, my hopelessness.