

CHAPTER 6

A DATE WITH DISASTER

IT WAS A beautiful, winter afternoon as I strolled through the streets of New York. I had become a working actress and model with familiar roles on soap operas, film and TV. My face was being splashed on magazine covers, newspapers and in Vogue magazine.



New York modeling photo



**The photo that landed me
the Vogue Magazine gig**

That particular afternoon I had another audition that could possibly afford me to move closer to having my children live with me in New York. Their visits were too infrequent and it had become too painful to let them go each time they would leave to go back with their Father's in Florida.

I had dressed as the executive I was to portray. I made sure that I was quite unassuming in my beautiful suit. After the audition, I made my way back to my apartment. The entry door in the vestibule of our apartment building had been broken for several months and a key or buzzing to be let in was unnecessary. After entering the building, I made my way to the elevator. When I turned to push the button to our penthouse, I noticed a man dressed in black enter behind me. I had never seen him before and knew immediately that he didn't belong in this small building. When I turned in his direction, I noticed his icy stare as he reached into his black leather jacket. I braced for the worst, and it was.

He pulled out a gun and put it to my head and softly but with sincere intention said, "If you look at me I will kill you." I started to shiver uncontrollably and cry. My children and my Mother, what will they do? I thought to myself. They depend on me. I have to live! I could feel the cold muzzle of his gun at my temple. All I could hear was my begging him "please don't hurt me, please." I pleaded. "I will give you anything you want." He shoved the gun to my head harder and harder and insisted I shut up. I did. I faced the wall of the elevator, as he had demanded. The elevator did not move. I later found out that he had apparently cased the building and knew the comings and goings of its tenants. I just happened to be the one as he strategically hid in the stairwell of my building, looking for his victim on November 16, 1984.

The terror was real and justified; I just didn't know it yet. He sodomized me, stole all the money I had just retrieved from the bank and the clothing I had just purchased to browse the museums the next day with Barry. At one point, I found myself on my knees obliging him of his every demand to live. Plunging his penis in my mouth again and again, he drained me of every ounce of dignity and thrust me into a pool of filth. I managed to stumble to my feet as he turned to exit. "Look at me and you're dead," he exploded. "If you tell anyone or call the police I will find you and kill you." I stood dutifully

facing the elevator wall fearing for my life as I imagined his semen drain from the corners of my mouth.

When he was out of sight, I pounded the button to the penthouse. The elevator slowly made its way to the top and the door opened. I told myself over and over again that I was OK. I struggled to unlock the bolt to our apartment and the two other locks that were to prevent entry. Little did I know that the deed would be committed in the elevator? Why didn't it move? How could I be OK? I wasn't!

As I entered our empty apartment, I habitually moved to the dining room table to place my keys and other belongings on the tray in the center. I turned to go into the bathroom and suddenly found myself sprawled on the floor. I had collapsed. I clung to the toilet. I vomited once, twice. I lost count. I eventually pulled myself up and washed my mouth in the sink. It was as if in slow motion as I continued to repeat to myself over and over again, "I am OK," I would begin, "I am OK."

When I eventually found my reflection in the bathroom mirror, I let the reality of the moments before reveal itself. I began to cry. That led to hysteria. I raced to the dining room and back to the bathroom. I turned the shower on and looked through every cabinet for the mouthwash. I was remembering every detail of his penis. It was long, thick and black. It was painful as he thrust it down my throat. Each time was harder and deeper than the time before. He plunged it time and time again down my throat while I helplessly knelt in front of him. I don't remember the gun at that point. It was as if time didn't exist. I do remember his eyes. They were glassed over with a frightening combination of sadness and rage. It was then that I knew. He was seizing this opportunity of power in his world of hopelessness. I was his victim. Each plunge relieved him of the horrors that I could never imagine in my world of privilege and overindulgence. I forgave him but I never forgot what fear felt like.

"I am OK!" I am OK!" The words became louder and faster. I walked to the tub. I drank mouthwash. I ran out of the room and ripped the clothes from my body. I wasn't OK. I had a gun to my head, my life threatened by a stranger with black cold eyes, robbed and sodomized. I wasn't OK.

I suddenly stopped. I turned to see a trail of clothing. The shower was still running. My words suddenly changed to, "I have to call Barry." I began rummaging for the phone. "I have to call him." I reached for

the phone and frantically dialed his number. There was no answer. I thought it odd. He should be home from work. My thoughts were racing. "I have to call someone." My tears were blinding me. I began to choke again. Why were my roommates away? Oh, God, please help me. I need to think! Suddenly it dawned on me. "Danny!" I shouted, "he will be home." The phone rang three times and finally a female voice asked, "Hello?" The signature greeting in our Country for whatever the reason but I wasn't willing to ask why. "Hello, is Danny there?" I forced. "Is this you, Donna?" asked the voice at the other end. "Yes, yes", I answered. I realized that it was Danny's housekeeper. "Kathleen?" I asked. "Yes, whatever is the matter?" She quickly replied. "Danny. I need Danny, Kathleen!" I exclaimed. "He is at work, Donna," she said with her thick Irish brogue. "But it's late!" I questioned. "Why is he at work?" I continued. "Donna, it is 3:30 in the afternoon," she explained, "he won't get home until his usual 7PM," she paused. I could hear in her silence that she was reassessing my voice. "What is wrong, Donna?" She was now concerned. "Have him call me right away at home, Kathleen." I anxiously looked around. "Yes, I am at home, please!" I pleaded breathlessly. "Please, Kathleen!" It was seconds later the phone rang, startling me. I reached for it knowing that it was Danny. "Donna," his voice was quivering as if he knew it was bad news. My silence was piercing. The words were now impossible to say. "Donna, where are you?" He demanded. "Donna!" I was crying uncontrollably. I managed to whisper, "I am at home." Please help me, Danny." Then suddenly the phone went dead. I laid my head down on the couch next to the phone. I knew to wait. Danny would be here.

He was a man I had been seeing for the last few months. I hadn't been too generous with my feelings and the love I knew I was capable of giving since I had moved to New York. Danny's sincerity and true love had certainly gotten lost in the shuffle. He was 16 years older than myself and had the typical Italian features. His dark eyes would lock you in with his piercing glare. His powerful presence drew you in immediately. He was raised during a time in the Bronx where survival came at any expense. His Father and his Father's brother had come from Italy and paved the way for their families with violence and power. This power eventually emerged from the belly of the Teamsters. His Uncle had been appointed to office within the Organization and controlled over two million people. His influence with judges and

politicians were evident from the streets of New York to Washington. The family often used their Uncle's power for favors. A famous rock star and family member avoided serious criminal consequences as the result of their forging prescriptions and racing down the Long Island expressway while under the influence. No charges were ever filed and it never reached the press. At one time Danny told me that with power you do not need money. Although Aunt and Uncle lived in a modest apartment in Yonkers, I never believed that he didn't have money tucked away somewhere.

The pounding at the door became an echo inside my apartment. It had to be Danny. When I opened the door, Danny took me in his arms without hesitation. I was nude, but he didn't seem to notice. He led me to the couch and lay me down as he wiped the hair from my face and I began to feel safe again. The tears subsided and I curled up closer to him. His warm body rocked me as he asked me questions. I could only say over and over again, "Please don't call the police, please", I pleaded. "He said he would kill me if I told anyone." "Danny, he could be watching." I managed to see the concern in his face as I lifted my eyes to see if he was hearing me. "Please, Danny." He hesitated and tried to assure me that it wouldn't happen. He wouldn't let it happen and that we must call the police. We did.

Within a short time, two officers arrived. They entered my apartment and were absorbing their environment. I watched them look from side to side with one hand on their gun in their holsters as they walked through every small room in my apartment. Each question was direct and willful. The male officer seemed to jump two stairs at a time as he went to the upstairs bedroom and terrace "My name is Officer Simmons and this is Officer Janis," referring to the female officer. She was a heavysset black woman around 30. She carried herself with self-assurance, but with an obvious sense of compassion and concern. "Are you OK?" She asked as she carefully sat next to me. "Yes." I replied. I couldn't tell her. I drew closer to Danny. The other officer seemed to be satisfied with his search and approached Officer Janis, Danny and myself. "What exactly happened?" he asked me as he stood over us. "Can I talk to Officer Janis alone, please?" I whispered with help from Danny. "Yeah, yeah, he replied." He dutifully left the living room with Danny. Officer Janis was larger than life to me at that point. Her blue uniform, gun and all that went with being a police officer seemed to take all the space in the room.

“He had a gun,” I began, “he sodomized me and robbed me.” I looked away as if in shame. “He said he would kill me if I told anyone and I am scared”. Her face changed. She went from an obliging police officer to a woman filled with concern and compassion. “Donna, we are going to have to call the sex squad.” She quickly asserted. “Now, with your consent, we are going to take you to New York Hospital.” I slowly uncurled from my position on the couch. I had managed to throw some clothes on before their arrival and now reached for my sweater and Danny’s hand. I refused to leave his side. I didn’t for four years and my children soon joined us.