

## CHAPTER 1

# Worth Protecting

It's a typical night.

Julie double-latches the door when Ed leaves. She didn't want to have sex with him, but somehow she was talked into it. In a way, she felt as if she owed it to him. After all, he took her out for dinner and drinks, and spent time listening to her troubles. Maybe she thought it would take away some of her lonely, empty feelings. It didn't.

Across town, Brad is driving Sarah home in silence. It's their first date, and in the restaurant Sarah told him she'd been warned about date rape. With a stern look on her face, she outlined a set of rules that he'd have to follow if they were going to spend time together. He left the restaurant feeling confused, misunderstood, and insulted. He still feels that way, but he's too proud to say it.

Walking in the woods, Lisa feels a little alarmed when John's arm drops lower and lower on her back, but she says nothing. She finds it hard to believe that a well-respected young man like John would try anything. Later tonight he'll rape her, brutally, on a bed of dry leaves and twigs.

As Peggy says "No" and pushes Ron back against the steering wheel, several voices are going off in his head. One is laughing: "It's a game. She wants it!" Another, speaking calmly, says "Give her time. You like her." A third voice is screaming, "It's too late! I can't stop!" And underneath them all, his father's voice is yelling, "Fight back, you little sissy! Be a man!"

Larry is thinking about his walk with Beth earlier this evening. She said a lot of things that made it clear she was interested. Then later, when they were walking, she got kind of quiet when he put his arm around her and kissed her. He wondered if she might really be more shy than he'd ever imagined. She's interested, though. He can tell.

Beth is on the phone with a friend, describing the way Larry kept putting his arm around her while they walked and the inappropriately sexual way he kissed her. She felt scared and violated. It brought back a lot of bad feelings from sexual abuse in her childhood. But it never occurred to her to push him away or tell him to stop. Now she's furious. "I feel like I've been raped!" she tells her friend.

In the next apartment, Dawn stands in the shower and lets the hot water mix with her tears and turn her body red. She remembers the way his arms felt, pinning her shoulders and pulling off her clothes, and the way his legs pushed her knees apart. She doesn't understand it. Jack had acted like a friend until that moment. She struggled and yelled "No," but he forced her to have sex anyway. Now she feels just like a tramp. It hasn't occurred to her yet that she's just been raped.

## Two Sides

Of course, these aren't the only kinds of pictures that make up this night. At the other end of the scale there are people who are laughing and happy and peaceful—people who are safe with friends who care. There are people whose sexuality is a gift that they give to one another—if and when they're both ready. It's given with affection and respect, expecting nothing but the same in return.

But for others, their sexuality is being used tonight. It has become a weapon or war, a prize to be won, a city to be stormed, the price of survival, evidence of manhood, bait for a trap, payment for attention or drugs—even a desperate cry for help. And there are those whose sexual safety will be sacrificed just because they lack the knowledge and skill to protect it.