

Chapter 1



Telling the Truth

Accusations. This is how it always begins. Screaming follows when my answers prove inadequate. Then come the threats, and finally the misery of surrender.

I was about eight at the time, living in a small red brick apartment building in Plymouth, Massachusetts. Our apartment was on the basement floor, so there was not a good view outside, only a few small quarter windows allowing in some daylight. The building stood on a grassy hill that overlooked Myles Standish State Forest. Some days I would just curl up on the sun-warmed grass, staring down into the forest below me and imagining that I was a bird darting between the trees.

My anger grew as we went through the same cycle day after day. I stood in our tiny living room facing the yellow sofa with my mother giving me that disdainful stare that made me feel ashamed. I'd look towards the light tan carpet, afraid to make eye contact with her. The details of the accusation did not matter, as I seldom had any idea what she was talking about. Whether there was a quarter missing from her bureau or the bathroom light being left on at night, there was no end to the possibilities of accusations. Each day the school bus dropped me off at the bottom of the hill, I paused at the bus-stop to gather whatever courage I could muster. I knew that a new accusation would be awaiting me, starting the cycle anew.

“Stand up straight when I’m talking to you!” She barks at me. “And stop looking down at your feet. Where is it, what did you do with it?” she screams, finger pointed towards me.

“I don’t know,” I say defensively, shrugging my shoulders.

“You little fucking liar,” she says, standing up from the couch and slapping my face. “Now get in your room!”



I would rush into my small room in our apartment, slamming the white door shut before ripping clumps of my own short blond hair out. I hid the hair under my giant stuffed bear, which stood up to my waist in height. The bear was a gift from my maternal grandparents, ever standing ready to accept my love. I clung to the bear; its soft white and gray fur brought me comfort during times of sadness or anger.

My mother grew suspicious of the growing bald spot on the top of my head and one afternoon decided to tear the room apart. Eventually, she found the tangled lump of blond hair hidden under the bear and challenged me for answers, answers I did not have. I could not explain the anger inside me, at least not an explanation I dared speak in front of her. I had begun craving independence and the seeds of rebellion sprouted forth. She pushed me at every opportunity, accused and cursed me for anything ranging from theft to family misfortune. I just did not understand.

My only outlet was to punish myself through self-inflicted pain, just to release the frustration. My mother took an attitude of open hostility against me, one that persisted throughout my childhood.

“I’m going to send you to a mental institution!” she screamed at me, her long dirty blond hair swinging between her shoulder blades as she frantically shook her head. She wiped the sweat from her flushed brow then paused for a moment and looked down at me with great disgust waving the fist full of my hair she found at me. I clung to my stuffed bear, looking up at her.

“If you do not learn to behave, I’m going to send you to a reform school for boys.” She had hesitated for just a moment longer before her voice shifted

into a menacing tone. “They just love cute little white boys at the reform school. They will take care of you real good.” Turning her back on me, she stormed out of the room, leaving me weeping into my bear’s fur while I continued to hug it with all my strength.

I’d heard of reform school before I was in second grade. However, I was left pondering the nature of how they would take care of me. Strange feelings overtook me. At first, heat surged through my body, then excitement. My heart began to beat faster, and for the first time that day I smiled. The words *take care of you* echoed in my mind over and over. Other boys at this reform school were going to take care of me. My mind reinterpreted her hidden threat; other boys were going to be touching me. I did not understand what this might mean, but I wanted desperately to find out. These strange longings would grow and expand in time. The seed long within me had sprouted. Yet, it did not grow for a while.

We eventually moved from the basement apartment to my grandparents’ house in the same town. The small ranch style house was nestled in small groves of pine and oak trees. There were numerous cranberry bogs in the area and a large waterfront district a few miles east of the house. Small single engine airplanes frequently flew overhead, taking off and landing at the local airport just to the north.

The yard was ideal for play, with a large back yard that sloped down into a small grove of pines and blueberry bushes. The neighbors behind the house owned a pair of horses that I visited every day. The house had three small bedrooms. My room was adjacent to the living room, just wide enough to fit my bed and a small dresser. When in the house I spent most of my time looking out the large living room bay window watching the cars and trucks drive by. Otherwise, I sat on the back deck with my grandmother. We would try to identify the particular birds visiting the feeder using a small field guide to birds. I went down the stairs and tossed a ball around with my grandfather on the lawn or helped him weed his small garden.

Because of the influence and presence of my grandparents (my mother’s parents), my problems decreased. More often than not, my mother would go off with her cousin Alice, leaving me behind. Alice’s arrival frequently

corresponded with noticeable changes in my mother's behavior. Alice was stern yet generally pleasant towards me. However, when they left together, they would return in a giggly or light-hearted mood, which would come crashing down a few hours later. I found the sudden mood shifts to be the most troubling occurrence because it added uncertainty and fear to my already besieged mind. One afternoon, though, while my grandparents were out for the day, my mother and her cousin called me into the small bedroom my mother was staying in at the end of the house.



Mother closes the curtains and shades, leaving just a shaft of sunlight entering the room. She held a large red case, almost like a toolbox of some sort. She opened the case and took out some items, including candles, a bell, incense, goblet, matches, and a book. The book was entitled *The Satanic Bible*. She placed the black and red candles around in a pattern that she refers to as a pentagram with a circle around it. She ordered me into the imaginary circle and told me to remain silent and not leave the center of the circle for any reason," or else."

She and Alice joined me in the circle while they lit a burner and then some incense. The snaking trail of smoke climbed towards the ceiling. The ritual was both exciting and frightening. She picked up the book and looked over at me, smiling. She told me that she would pray to Satan and summon demons, but the demons were not allowed to enter the circle. As long as I remained calm, I would be protected.

She began the mass by ringing the bells; she used the book to speak words I'd never heard before. The ringing echoed faintly in the room, combining with the sweet smell of the incense. I felt almost dizzy, overcome by a giddy feeling of excitement.

She proceeded to cut herself with a silver knife with an ornate looking pearl handle, just enough to draw a steady trickle of blood from her finger, allowing it to flow into a tarnished bronze colored chalice. Alice took the knife and sliced her own finger, allowing drops of blood to fall into the chalice. My mother held the chalice upwards as an offering and mumbled a few words.

After placing it back on the ground, she took a long slender writing instrument and dipped it into the blood. The blood served as the ink, allowing her to write on a small blank piece of white paper. I couldn't see the writing, but she told me it was an offering for our luck and fortune. She ripped the paper into small pieces and set it ablaze. The mass finished with a final ringing of the bells, driving away the demons.

I couldn't see these creatures, but the air was laden with smoke and darkness. I was sure the demons were there.



That afternoon was my first introduction to the “Lucifer,” originally the chosen angel. The year was 1976 but on this otherwise bright summer afternoon, it might have been 1692. Witchcraft was alive and well in the suburbs of Massachusetts.

Mother and Alice repeated this scene several times during the summer, always when my grandparents were out of the house. Since these rituals were never performed in their presence, I always wondered what the ramifications would be if they found out. As strange as it sounds, these were the few times I felt emotionally close and accepted by my mother, so I was grateful for them.

As October approached, we were on the road once again. My mother, Alice and I settled down one town over into a small cottage in the woods of Carver. The cottage was just a ten minutes' drive from my grandparents' home, nestled amid lush green pines and small evergreen trees. Alice worked for the state in Boston and money my mother received from welfare covered the cottage's rent. The commute from Carver to Boston was long, so Alice left early in the morning before I got the bus and did not return home until the sun had set. My mother spent a great deal of time sleeping during these times, taking various prescriptions that generally left her tired and moody.

Loving the outdoors and the woods, I approved of our new home's location. Surrounded by miles of forest and a large lake that reflected the sunlight in shimmering ripples of yellow, it was almost a boy's dream come true. The dream didn't last long though.

I started the third grade at age nine that autumn. School became an issue for me almost immediately. The first day I climbed into the bus, the driver assumed I was a girl, as did the kids on the bus.

“Who are you?” the bus driver inquired, searching his list.

Before I could answer, he said, “Oh, there must be a mistake. Your name is Danielle, right?”

I looked at him in surprise, “No, it’s Daniel!” I snapped back. The kids in the front seat immediately giggled and pointed at me. I looked down and began blushing.

The bus driver cleared his throat. “Well, Danielle is French for Daniel. So climb on in, let’s go.”

This led to the unavoidable teasing and taunting one would naturally expect from such a mistake. I could barely contain the tears of shame though I did a reasonable job of keeping some composure for the trip to school. My natural femininity provided a constant source of irritation throughout the first semester, though eventually the kids forgot about it. Perhaps subconsciously, I began to isolate myself.

Yet school was only a passing nuisance because my mother’s attitude towards me changed quickly. She resented my growing desire for privacy and independence. Away from the influence of my grandparents, my mother’s disposition soured. The cycle of accusations and threats began to accelerate, taking on a more menacing tone.



The south shore is beautiful during the autumn. Oak and maple trees are turned brilliant shades of red and gold, mingling with the varying shades of green pines as the gusty autumn wind blew the leaves into clouds of swirling color. The weather is just warm enough to still enjoy wading into the cool, clear lake water in my bare feet and shorts as the sun beat down on my bare back. Then I can sit back in the soft warm sand and watch the sun slowly set over the lake as bats emerged from the woods and swooped across the water. My favorite past time is creeping through the forest along the water line, hunting for turtles

and tadpoles that would emerge from the muck and scamper into the safety of the deeper water.

My cousin Jennifer was visiting for a long weekend. She was about eleven years old with pretty long black hair that flowed between her shoulder blades. Jennifer was the daughter of Alice's sister who lived north of Boston. Lacking any better ideas, I took a box of toy cars out of my closet for us to play with. Despite the immaturity of it, she did not seem to mind and I was grateful for the company. We pushed a pair of bright red fire engines between the two beds in my room while my mother and Alice talked quietly in the living room. Eventually, my mother came in and said they were taking a walk, and while they were gone, under no circumstances were we to leave the bedroom. We both agreed and continued playing for a while after the outside door closed behind them. Jennifer stopped playing with the toys and sat right beside me. Her sudden close proximity made me nervous, causing me to back away from her. A look of disappointment crossed her face as she brushed her long hair out of her face. She smiled at me, which caused me to blush at the sudden attention she was showering on me. I just didn't share in her interest though, resulting in an awkward silence filling the room. Jennifer began growing restless as boredom ensued.

"Look, there's one of the cats," Jennifer said, pointing to the small black and white kitten sitting on the armrest of the couch, licking his paw.

"I'm going to say hi; I'll be right back."

"Don't get caught out there, you don't want to get into trouble," I warned her.

"I'm just going to pet the cat and come right back."

I nodded my head, watching her from the door jam, toy fire truck in my hand. She petted the cat and scratched behind his ear, before returning quickly. About thirty seconds later, the outside door leading into the kitchen opened. It was quiet for a moment, way too quiet. I got this sick feeling in my stomach, a nauseous feeling that something terrible was about to happen. My cousin didn't seem to feel it, but I did. I was afraid.

Both women entered the room. The fear surged inside me, even though there existed no reason for such a reaction. I began to sweat and shake. The cycle was coming and my cousin was about to experience it.

“Did you stay in the room like we told you?” my mother asked.

“Yes,” my cousin blurted.

I remained silent for the moment, but my mother turned to me. “Daniel, did you stay in the room?”

“I did not leave the room, not even for a second!”

She fell silent for a moment, a scowl crossing her face.

“You are a liar.”

“No, I swear I stayed right here!” I turned to my cousin for support.

“Well, I left the room for just a few seconds to pet the cat. But I came right back.” Jennifer confessed.

“What did I tell you?” Alice screamed.

“Which one of you stole the pills?”

My cousin and I looked at one another in surprise. “What pills?” I inquired.

“The pills that were sitting on the kitchen counter when we left.”

Mother searched the room, first checking under each bed on both sides of my room. She then rummaged through the closet, pushing piles of boxes and toys back and forth for about ten minutes. I sat on my bed on the left side of the room while Jennifer sat on the edge of the bed facing me. I looked out my bedroom window that looked out towards the dirt driveway. The sun was just starting to set as the sky began to turn orange.

“Pay attention to us when we are talking to you.” Alice admonished me.

“If you don’t tell us where you hid that bottle, we will beat the truth out of you.” My mother threatened. I thought I had a reasonable grasp of the truth. However, I was mistaken.

“You took the pills didn’t you? Do I need to have your stomach pumped out to prove it?”

Again, we claimed our innocence and ignorance about the pills.

“Get the belt!” my mother ordered Alice.

Alice returned holding a long black leather belt and ordered my cousin to pull down her pants in front of me. Jennifer turned towards me with a look of horror and shame, then burst into tears. We were now being taught a lesson of humiliation. Alice turned to me and ordered my pants off. Together

in our underwear, my cousin and I cowered, looking towards one another for comfort.

We were told to climb on the beds, face down and spread our legs. She told us to remove our underwear and gave us one last chance to “tell the truth.” I had never seen both my mother and Alice so angry. I cried and begged them to believe me. Alice took the belt, folded it over, and positioned herself behind me. I could hear the “swoosh” of the leather as it glided through the air and felt the rush of air on my bare butt cheeks just before the belt impacted on my flesh. She struck me forcefully about ten times, each strike burned like hell.

“Well,” my mother cried out. “Where is it? What did you do with that bottle of pills?”

I had difficulty speaking while sobbing, but I forced out, “Nothing. I did not take it. Nobody took it!”

This was the wrong answer. “Oh, nobody took it,” she replied with a sarcastic and mocking tone.

She turned to my cousin who immediately began to beg, but the belt was soon striking her. My mother made me watch her take the beating, all while my cousin was sobbing, “I’ve done nothing wrong!”

This macabre torture paused briefly. One of them gave another ultimatum to tell the truth. We were to reveal where the pills were hidden or else.

Having not taken them, I could offer no response. What I understood to be the truth was already told. The next round began, and this time my cousin was made to watch while I was beaten. This time the beating was done with more venom, striking both my ass and the sensitive back part of my legs.

The pain overwhelmed me. Wailing, I begged her to stop. Without missing a beat, she moved back to the little girl and belted her across the legs. I heard the leather make a sickening slap into her skin. We played this game for another round or two until finally I broke under the stress. I couldn’t stand the pain, nor could I bear watching my cousin be so ruthlessly struck.

“I stole the pills, I took them!” I blurted out.

My confession brought a smile to her face, quickening my downward descent.

The strange thing was she never did make an issue of my failure to produce the pills. The details of where I hid the pills or why I took them in the first place suddenly did not matter. I spent the next two weeks grounded in my room, and that was the end of the cycle. However, the situation continued to reel in my mind. Did I take the pills? I was no longer sure. Truth was losing its meaning. Perhaps I never understood it to begin with.

The cycle repeated many times over the course of the year, always centering on theft or missing items. I was beaten with the belt, I confessed and the matter was settled with a simple grounding to my room. My mother accused me of being a “pathological liar” and a kleptomaniac.

I'm sorry these things were stolen, but I cannot recall taking them.



I seemed to spend increasing amounts of time in my room, more than anywhere else in the world. I began to fear returning home from school each afternoon. On at least four occasions, I was accused of theft and eventually confessed my responsibility.

My mother and Alice's bedroom was right beside mine; the doors stood side-by-side opening into the living room. This meant that most of the “stolen” objects were from her room; apparently I crept in and conducted the thefts after everyone else was sleeping. I was rarely left home alone though. The only privacy I got was when I was out in the forest exploring. How or when these thefts were conducted was a mystery, but I was the only possibility my mother was willing to consider, so she must be right.

Confession led to relief from the screaming and occasional beatings. I preferred spending the week in my room rather than enduring the seemingly endless cycle. So I found a shortcut, a new approach to truth. I began to confess to the accusations immediately, avoiding the cycle. Everything would then return to normal; I'd get a big warm hug and kiss before going to bed and within two days the incident was all but forgotten.

However, when truth is constantly reinventing itself, how do you cling to what is real?

I was not sure what was real anymore. I felt trapped in a nightmare that never stopped. *How do you even know what is real?* My mother was the only one who had the answers. I was losing myself somehow. Sadness began taking hold inside me, heightening my growing sense of hopelessness.

Chapter 2



Role Models

The next year we moved into the city of Boston in the area called Dorchester, a dense residential area, packed with colonial triple-decker style homes. The interiors of these buildings were handsomely constructed in dark stained oak, ornate trim, and even some stained glass windows. The apartment we moved into was over one hundred years old, fixtures for gas lanterns were still embedded in the walls.

Unfortunately, I was not cut out to be a city boy. While the larger apartment was nice, there were few trees, let alone any wilderness around. It was in the heart of the city, a maze of black pavement bordered by white concrete sidewalks, buildings, and busy streets. Most of the area was residential, except for the large church and adjoining school across the street and some convenience stores a few blocks away. The homes were packed fairly close to one another; only eight feet divided most of the properties. Each building had its own narrow front lawn, many bordered by tall shrubs. The backyards were generally dirt because so little sunlight could shine past the tall buildings. My mother asked me what I thought of Boston.

“I hate it,” I said, shredding a piece of paper and dropping it into the small yellow waste bucket. She grimaced at me and responded, “Well, you better get used to it. Because this is the only place we can afford to live.”

There was little wait for the cycle to begin again. The belt was rarely used anymore. Punishment was just a matter of whether my grounding would be for one week or two. A direct confession resulted in a shorter sentence. A claim of innocence earned longer sentences. My choice varied with my mood or how indignant I felt at the latest charges leveled against me.

The first few months passed bearably enough, but I wasn't adjusting well nor making friends. I feared the older kids in the neighborhood and kept to myself. The few times I explored the neighborhood a few blocks away, the older kids would push me around and threaten to hurt me if I didn't stay out of their "turf."

When not grounded, I was caught between trying to remain out of the house and away from my mother while trying to avoid contact with the tougher neighborhood kids. This limited me to hiding in the shadows between the buildings, or walking back and forth, confined to my own block.

At least I had a nice home cooked meal to look forward to at night. My mother loved to cook and frequently had a feast lovingly prepared and usually dinnertime could be counted on as being harmonious. There always seemed to be an unofficial "truce" in any hostilities during dinner or at bedtime. Except for an occasional cat pouncing on me during the night, I could depend on peace and safety in the darkness.

Unfortunately, my effeminate tendencies were becoming an issue. I had no wish to play contact sports whatsoever. I despised aggressive play and fighting. I became excessively emotional, leading to ready tears. My feelings were easily hurt by the careless words of my mother or the neighborhood kids.

Despite the onset of puberty, my prepubescent voice remained and resonated with femininity. Kids in school loved to point out that I talked "like a girl." Despite my best efforts, I really couldn't see what I was doing wrong and why they felt so negatively towards me. Therefore, I withdrew a little further, avoided the other kids at recess, and kept to myself the best I could. Nobody caused me trouble when I headed straight home from the schoolyard and hid in the refuge of the backyard, keeping to myself while only occasionally venturing forth to the front where I was more visible.



I was attending 4th grade at McCormick School during a strange period of Boston's history. "Forced busing" was still causing controversy. I managed to earn my way into something called a "magnet school," a place where "gifted" students were sent to instead of the normal local public school. By law, students were forced into non-local neighborhood schools to promote better integration and diversity. I did not understand all the fuss, until the day the bus was attacked.

The school was in the heart of "the projects" in South Boston called Columbia Point. Despite my dislike for the Dorchester area, the site of these towering decrepit dirty brick buildings made me grateful for my own neighborhood. The apartments were scattered, almost in a random fashion around the school. There were no trees, just bland fractured white concrete, broken bottles and spray painted graffiti everywhere. Many of the windows on these buildings were broken or boarded up with plywood and painted a dark shade of red. The first few floors with intact windows were covered with iron grills to keep thieves away. Burned out and abandoned rust covered cars dotted the streets, some missing their tires or fenders. The school was surrounded by a ten foot chain-link fence with coils of barbed wire stretching across the top to discourage people from trying to climb over it. A school situated in the middle of this sad urban ghetto struck me as both sad and ironic.

The first day the bus rolled into the ghetto, some men and older boys emerged from the few tall green bushes, throwing rocks and pieces of brick at the bus. The rocks hurtled through the air, cracking several windows.

"Go home! Stay out of our neighborhood!" the men screamed as the bus rolled past.

The bus sped away towards the school, tires screeching with the sudden acceleration. All the kids began screaming and crying in panic. The bus side-swiped the front post of the fence as the driver negotiated the corner too quickly. The sound of the scraping metal frightened everyone further, resulting in more screaming. The brakes screeched as the bus was brought to a sudden halt in the schoolyard. The driver rushed down the aisle, checking to see if the flying glass had hurt any of us.

“I’m so sorry!” the bus driver exclaimed. “I won’t let you be put through that again unless your safety can be guaranteed.”



For the rest of the school year, a police motorcade escorted the bus. Two police cruisers were positioned in front and behind of the convoy of buses while motorcycles flanked both sides until we pulled safely into the schoolyard. Barbed wire fences and police officers guarded the front and rear doors of the school as if Soviet commandos were expected to storm the place.

I now equally feared going home or to school. Fortunately, the hostility towards the busing gradually disappeared later in the year, and so did much of the police presence towards the spring.

At this point, I still didn’t have any friends. Gym class, of course, was that dreaded period in school where I was always the last one picked. Unlike other boys, I threw like a girl and didn’t like getting hit. I didn’t know why I was so different in that regard, but I reluctantly participated in these games in hopes of gaining some measure of respect. Again, ultimately I just avoided talking to the other kids except where necessary. I just couldn’t find anyone to identify with. It was as if I weren’t even there sometimes.

In class, I hid in the back, kept my head down and never looked around. It seemed if I did, someone immediately harassed me. I started hearing the word “sissy,” and it shamed me. There was nobody to whom I could positively identify with, no role models I could follow to better understand myself.



My mother resumed her satanic masses again after a long period of inactivity. She performed the ritual in the living room of the apartment, which seemed oddly fitting because the house had an almost Gothic feel to it. The large living room and long narrow hallway created an echo chamber effect—an ideal setup for performing the black mass.

She performed these masses almost once a week for most of the year. As with my prior experience, we all sat in the center of the circle while she summoned the demons. She described to me the danger of these demons. They liked to hurt people, even torture or possess them. At some point during one of these little “lessons,” she tossed in the notion that demons especially like boys.

I occasionally glanced at some of her books when I was home alone. I found it interesting that demons always seemed to be male, interesting indeed. Her library ranged from numerology, dream interpretation, to Satanism and occult practices.

I’d stick my head into the hallway to make sure I heard no footsteps, and then rushed back and gently open the little box filled with her “magical” items. I carefully picked them up and examined them, trying to understand. I never could work up the courage to try performing the mass myself, though I would picture it in my mind. Touching the objects felt empowering; I wondered if the demons watched me as I nervously rang the bell.

Sometimes the hair on the back of my neck stood on end, almost as if these male spirits were right there, reaching out to me. I found myself wanting to feel their touch.



The storm seems to come out of nowhere.

It brought with it, of all unlikely and miraculous things, a hope for my future, an image of my adult potential. The day was February 6th, 1978, one of the most exciting moments of my young life. The blizzard of the century was in progress and the sight was awe-inspiring. The snow swirled between the buildings as ferocious winds whipped it into a chaotic frenzy like a tornado. There was no forward visibility, and you couldn’t see across the street most of the time. This continued for hours, starting early in the day and continuing right into the night.

Lying down to sleep, I kept my curtain opened so I could watch the snow-fall. Of course, I couldn’t sleep as I peered out the window every ten minutes, gleefully watching the swirling clouds of white beneath the streetlights.

Eventually as the wind shifted, the window became caked with snow. Frustrated by this development, I snuck around the house after Mother had gone to sleep, looking for a better view of the storm. I imagined myself trekking through the storm like an explorer, struggling to find my path through the blinding snow. My favorite large black and white cat Fat Man curled around my legs and purred softly, providing some extra warmth against the chill in the room. His sister, a gray and black cat, jumped up on the bed and made herself comfortable as well.

I finally managed to lie down and I soon drifted off to sleep. I awoke at dawn to the sound, which could only be described as a hurricane or tornado. I ran to the nearest window expecting to see the snow had ended, but to my frustration I couldn't find a window I could see through. Maybe the wind had plastered the snow on all the windows. Amazingly, I discovered that not only had the snow not ended, it had gotten worse. Or better, to my way of thinking!

The TV weathermen said the winds were now over seventy miles per hour and climbing quickly. Over a foot of snow covered the ground and more was expected to fall. The power went out about halfway through the storm. The temperature plunged inside the apartment. The wind whistled through many of the windows of the old building, causing the old yellow curtains to flutter in the draft. Within just a few hours, the temperature inside fell into the fifties while the outside air temperature dipped into the single digits. The snowplows had given up on the arduous task of clearing the street. Columbia Road disappeared in the spreading sea of white, as does all traffic.

We huddled together in the living room inside sleeping blankets as darkness set in. My excitement continued, helping to keep me warm as I fell asleep. The scene the next morning was jaw dropping. All the cars had seemingly vanished from the face of the earth. Car antennas poked out of the sea of snow like submarine periscopes. Snowdrifts actually covered some first-floor windows in the neighborhood.

It took hours for people to clear their doorways, never mind the sidewalks or their cars. My first few steps kept me on the surface of the snow, but eventually I fell through and instantly found myself in up to my neck. My initial fright turned to amusement, as my mother laughed at my predicament.

I struggled to climb up to the surface. Fortunately, the snow was fluffy and light. As I managed to get to the sidewalk, I saw that people were passing me on long black cross-country skis. Two dark blue snowmobiles buzzed loudly down the middle of what used to be a street, leaving a cloud of powder in their wake. The snowmobiles were making runs between the local stores, delivering goods to people unable to escape their homes. There were still no signs of snowplows.

The power remained off and the traffic lights at the intersections of Columbia Road were blinking uselessly. No traffic clogged the streets, and dozens of people were outside laughing, shoveling or just taking in the scene. The neighborhood had come together, providing each other with food and support. I was surprised at how total strangers behaved like old friends, if even just for that one day.

All this and school was canceled for nearly two weeks! When the power was restored and the local stations began displaying images from elsewhere in the area, the impact was frightening. Thousands of cars and trucks were buried in place on Route 128 and 495. The drivers were forced to huddle together in their cars awaiting rescue by snowmobile, skiers and even sled dogs! These cars sat abandoned for days until the National Guard could begin clearing a lane. Homes right along the coast were exposed to rising seas and thirty-foot waves, resulting in great loss of property.

The storm made a big impression on me in another profound way. I felt the need to learn more about storms and when they were coming. The weather maps and images used on television fascinated me and became a daily event.

I faithfully listened to Meteorologist Don Kent on the radio every morning, picking up the local paper to see the weather maps, and I watched every television weather forecaster I could find. I picked up their terminology quickly; I was able to understand their maps and began to guess about the forecasts before they displayed it. For the first time, I had found something that gave me a glimpse of what the future could hold in store. It brought me a measure of happiness.

This is what I'm going to be when I grow up.



Studying the weather maps and trying to make my own forecasts became my primary hobby. I even drew my own weather maps, working up all kinds of storm scenarios in my mind. I wondered what my teachers thought when they found little cold front doodles on my homework? Weather was becoming my own little world, my retreat from boredom, sadness, and my mother. It replaced my loneliness. It was something to embrace.