

Chapter 1

It was Saturday morning and Julie lay in bed, dreaming of last night; she was dancing to the throbbing beat of the disco music. As she approached consciousness the throbbing intensified and she realised that this particular sound was no longer part of her dream. It was a loud hammering on the front door. The after effects of too much alcohol meant that the noise was multiplied tenfold inside her head. She staggered out of bed and reached for her dressing gown, but somebody had already beaten her. The hammering was followed by the sound of raised voices – voices that Julie did not recognise, and she quickly walked onto the landing to see what the commotion was about.

As Julie peered down the stairs, her father glanced towards her, his face bearing a puzzled but grave expression. There were two people standing in the doorway, one a woman, aged about 30, plain, almost manly in appearance, of average height with short dark hair. The other was a man, aged late 40's to early 50's, tall with rugged features. Julie's mother stared up the stairs, her face a deathly pallor as she shakily uttered the words, 'They're police. They want you love.'

This threw Julie into immediate turmoil, and she began to descend the stairs, while addressing her mother. 'What are you talking about mam? What would the police want with me?'

She saw the policeman nod in her direction as he asked her father, 'Is this her?'

'Yes,' Bill uttered quietly and hung his head in shame. Anticipating what was to follow, he quickly shut the front door.

The policeman then focused his full attention on Julie as he spoke the words that were to remain etched on her brain for the rest of her life. 'Julie Quinley, I am Detective Inspector Bowden, this is Detective Sergeant Drummond. I am arresting you on suspicion of the murder of Amanda Morris. You do not have to say anything unless you wish to do so, but what you say may be given in evidence.'

Julie stared at the police officer in disbelief. A riot of confusing thoughts raced around in her mind as she tried to take in his words. "Amanda dead? Me, arrested?" She wanted to ask – What? Why? When? - but she was rendered speechless by the shock of this statement and somehow she couldn't force the words from her mouth.

Inspector Bowden, heedless of Julie's emotional state, wanted to get down to business straightaway. 'Sergeant Drummond – accompany the accused to her bedroom while she gets dressed and watch her very closely.'

He then turned to Julie's parents. 'As soon as your daughter is dressed she will be taken down to the station for questioning whilst we conduct a thorough search of the house.'

‘What do you mean search? What are you searching for?’ asked Bill.

‘Drugs Mr Quinley,’ the Inspector replied calmly.

On hearing the word ‘drugs’ Bill was unable to contain himself any longer and Julie watched, helpless, as he metamorphosed before her own eyes into a frenzied maniac.

‘Drugs? What the bloody hell are you talking about, drugs? My family’s never had anything to do with drugs, never, never!’ he fumed.

He shocked Julie by grabbing hold of her shoulder and shaking her violently, as he vented his anger. ‘What the bloody hell’s been going on Julie? What’s all this about drugs and ...and... people dying. Just what the hell have you been up to? I never, ever thought I’d live to see the day when my daughter was arrested because of bloody drugs!’

This was a side of Bill that Julie, at twenty-three years of age, had never witnessed. There had been many occasions when he had complained about her life style, but she’d just shrugged it off, knowing that deep down he thought the world of her. He was basically a kind and caring father and, seeing him like this, she finally submitted to tears as she struggled to reply ‘I don’t know dad, I’m sorry, but I really don’t know! I’ve never done drugs in my life!’

Then, putting her jumbled thoughts into words, she sobbed, 'Drugs? I don't know anything about drugs... Amanda's dead... Oh mam, help me please, get him off me, get these people out of here!'

Julie's mother, Betty, turned to Bill and said, 'Leave her alone Bill. Can't you see she's in a state? You're only making matters worse!'

Inspector Bowden quickly took control of the situation. 'Mr Quinley, can you please unhand your daughter and allow Sergeant Drummond to accompany her while she gets dressed?'

Bill mechanically released Julie and stared at the police officer in horror. Inspector Bowden continued, officiously. 'Now, if you will permit me to explain to all concerned - Amanda Morris died of severe intoxication and a possible drugs overdose in the early hours of this morning. As she was in the company of Julie Quinley and one other until approximately twelve thirty this morning, and returned home with them in an extremely drunken state, I have no alternative but to place Julie Quinley under arrest and take her down to the station for questioning. Now, if you will permit me to continue in my duties Mr Quinley, nothing further need be said at this point.'

Julie's father retreated resignedly into the living room, muttering to himself in despair. 'I can't take no more of this, I really can't!'

Led by Sergeant Drummond, Julie mounted the stairs slowly and dejectedly. From the corner of her eye she could see her mother standing motionless in the hallway until

she was disturbed by Inspector Bowden. ‘Mrs Quinley, could you help me to open the door please?’

When Julie’s mother had released the awkward door latch, he stepped forward, shouting ‘In here men, start in that room there, then work your way through to the kitchen.’

Julie’s senses were on full alert, the adrenaline pumping fiercely around in her body, as the police officers charged into the house and her father issued a barrage of insults at them. She was aware of her mother’s anguish emanating from the still figure at the foot of the stairs. She could feel her own fear and helplessness, then shame and anger as she noticed a group of nosy neighbours shouting and jeering at her mother. When one of them had the audacity to enquire, ‘Everything alright Betty love?’ her mother quickly slammed the front door shut in response.

In the upstairs bedroom, Julie could sense Detective Sergeant Drummond scrutinising her as she put her clothes on. No words were exchanged but Julie tried to dress as covertly as possible whilst the police officer’s eyes roamed up and down her body. She could feel her hands shaking and her heart beating rapidly, and hear words being exchanged downstairs. One of the voices was her father’s and he sounded angry.

Julie headed towards the bathroom to wash her face, which still contained traces of her make-up from the night before, but she was forcefully told that there was no time to waste and they wanted her down at the station for questioning as soon as possible.

Julie asked, ‘What about my hair?’

‘If you’re so concerned about it, you can grab a brush and do it in the car.’

Julie quickly picked up her hairbrush and placed it inside her handbag, which she threw over her shoulder.

‘I’ll take that if you don’t mind!’ said the sergeant, indicating Julie’s handbag. ‘It’ll have to be searched.’

‘Julie, aware of the Sergeant’s hostile manner, replied boldly. ‘That’s all right, I’ve got nothing to hide!’

She passed her handbag to Sergeant Drummond, then cringed with embarrassment as Sergeant Drummond rummaged through it and withdrew a packet of durex, which she proceeded to examine carefully. Once Sergeant Drummond had finished her thorough search, she tossed the bag back into Julie’s hands.

After several minutes Julie was ready to leave the house and she was obliged to emerge from her bedroom not having showered, brushed her hair or even cleaned her teeth.

They began to silently descend the stairs.

Inspector Bowden immediately appeared in the hallway and instructed Sergeant Drummond to lead Julie out to a waiting police car. He then ordered his men to check

the upstairs of the house. As the front door was being opened, Betty took hold of Julie's arm and tearfully said, 'I hope you'll be alright love.'

The look of anguish on Betty's face brought renewed tears to Julie's eyes, but she was too distressed to utter any words of reassurance to her mother. Her father, who had now calmed down slightly, said, 'Don't worry love, they can't charge you with anything you haven't done,' and he put his arm around Betty's shoulder in a comforting gesture. Julie knew that this was Bill's way of apologising for his earlier accusations.

When Julie stepped outside the front door she was horrified at the sight that met her. The crowd that had gathered on the opposite side of the street had steadily increased to such an extent that people were spilling over onto the road. As Julie walked onto the pavement with Sergeant Drummond gripping her arm the excited mutterings of the crowd subsided and there was a series of nudges and whispers.

Julie was now the focus of everybody's attention and she became painfully aware of her unkempt appearance, her untidy hair and unwashed face with mascara now streaked across her cheeks because of crying. The few steps from her house to the police car seemed to last longer than any other steps she had ever taken in her life. Although aware of her innocence, she felt embarrassed in front of the crowd and ashamed that she had brought this on her parents.

She knew that they would be subjected to malicious gossip for weeks to come. For anybody who had ever held a grudge, or felt envious of the Quinleys, it was now payback time.

The sight of the over inquisitive mob soon refuelled Bill's anger and Julie heard him, first arguing with the police officers, and then shouting abuse at the intrusive audience. 'Have you nothing else better to do? Get back in your houses and mind your own bleedin' business! Our Julie's innocent and she's better than the bleedin' lot of you put together. Now go on, piss off!'

His shouts were interspersed by Betty's uncontrolled sobbing.

Not one of the crowd flinched. Julie had no doubts that her father's spectacle had added to their entertainment. It occurred to her that she had never before seen her father so out of control, never seen her mother so upset, and her neighbours had never before seen Julie looking anything less than immaculate. For her it marked the beginning of a prolonged descent.

Suddenly, Julie caught sight of her younger sister, Clare, heading towards her. She could hear her astonished voice saying repeatedly to her friends, 'It's our Julie, It's our Julie!' As she became nearer, she shouted, 'Julie, what's happened, where are they taking you?'

A policeman quickly rushed in front of Clare, preventing her from making any contact with her sister, and Julie was bundled into the police car. As she shifted

uncomfortably on the rear seat, Julie could hear her younger sister's frantic screams, and, whilst the officers tried to restrain Clare, she shouted, 'Get off me, leave me alone, that's my sister, you can't take my sister!' It was all too much for an eight year old to take in.

The police car began to drive away. Julie heard her father shouting at the crowd again. 'I hope you've enjoyed your morning's entertainment. Now bugger off home the lot of you!'

She turned to see her mother trying to comfort Clare as the Quinley family stepped back inside their defiled home.

Inside the police car Julie tried to put aside her feelings of sorrow and despair in an attempt to compose herself. She felt the need to attain a degree of calm in order to tackle this situation. Although she knew that she was innocent, she felt utterly degraded and helpless.

Slowly, she opened her handbag, aware of Sergeant Drummond's observation. Julie took out a mirror and held it in front of her face. Her reflection echoed the way she was feeling about herself. She removed a tissue and used her own saliva to dampen it so that she could wipe the remains of stale make-up from her face. Having achieved that, she set about brushing her hair.

Sergeant Drummond, turned towards the officer driving the police car and quipped, 'Look at that, her friend's just snuffed it after a night out with her, and all she can think about is what she looks like!'

Julie decided to ignore the caustic comment. She needed to remain as composed as possible under the circumstances. For Julie, looking good usually meant feeling good, and she knew that it would help to give her the strength she needed to get through this ordeal.

In complete defiance of Sergeant Drummond's comment, Julie continued to work on her appearance, adding a little blusher and lip-gloss.

She then tried to think about her situation logically. "Yes, they had spiked Amanda's drink with shorts. There was no point in denying that. Chances were the police would find out anyway and that would only make matters worse. But what about the drugs?"

She tried to think whether there had been any time when it would have been likely that somebody had given drugs to Amanda, but decided that it was impossible to account for everybody's whereabouts throughout the entire evening. She had been too drunk herself for one thing.

As thoughts of Amanda flashed through her mind, she could feel her eyes well up with tears again, but she fought to maintain control. "I mustn't let them get the better of me," she kept telling herself repeatedly. Then she remembered the Inspector's words when he had said, '*possible* drugs overdose.' "So, there's a chance that no

drugs were involved anyway,” she thought, positively. Then her spirit was further dampened by the realisation that, if there were no drugs found there was no possibility that anybody else was involved. That could mean only one thing; that Amanda’s death was purely down to her and Rita having spiked Amanda’s drinks with various shorts throughout the evening.

Julie’s thoughts turned to Rita, and she wondered whether she had been taken in for questioning, as she was obviously the ‘one other’ to whom the Inspector had referred. She thought about the surly Inspector, convinced that he was going to give her one hell of a grilling once they got inside the station. “But I can’t have killed Amanda,” she thought, desperately. “She was starting to come round a bit when we left her.”

As she pictured her friend’s face the last time she had seen her, Julie fought once again to contain her tears, as she went through the events of last night in her mind.

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