

CHAPTER 1

June 30, 1971

“This was your choice, Janie,” the doctor said as she expertly slid the needle into a vein.

Janie cried out in fear and pain as the needle pierced her skin. The doctor depressed the plunger and her arm felt as if was on fire. She tried to scream but found that she couldn’t breathe. Her chest hurt and tightened; she wondered if she was being crushed. Her vision blurred and the doctor’s face faded. As her heart stopped, Janie’s one last coherent thought was *Rachel*.

Janie adjusted the breast pump and sighed with relief. Even though the doctor had given her a shot of something soon after she gave birth, her milk had started to flow during the week after her baby was born. Janie saw her full breasts as a sign from God.

For the first day or so she had expressed the milk by hand, standing in a warm shower and slowly massaging each swollen breast as she watched the white streams disappear down the drain. A maternal desire had been kindled as she held that tiny, warm body against her chest immediately after delivery. It simmered during the lonely days following the baby’s adoption. Now it burst forth into a flame of determination. Surely God wanted her to keep her baby.

That must be the reason she had milk in spite of the medication. She went outside the next day and bought a breast pump.

Janie had called the doctor and told her that she had changed her mind; she wanted to keep her baby. The doctor tried to discourage her. She reminded Janie that she had given the baby up for adoption because she wanted her to have two loving parents and a stable home. She pointed out that Janie was only 16, with no way to support a baby, and that she could not turn to her family for help. Janie was not deterred. She still had the cash her sister had given her. She also had the money from cashing in the airline ticket that her sister thought would take her to the other side of the country. It was enough, Janie insisted, to tide them over until she could find work.

With each day that passed, Janie’s breasts produced more milk and her resolve grew. She wanted that baby. For the next two weeks, she called the doctor every day, then twice a day, three times a day. The doctor told her that if she were to renege on her agreement, if she were to take the baby back, the adoptive parents would sue her for the money they had paid for her medical care and living expenses. Janie told her she did not care, that she would pay them back somehow.

After two weeks of arguing by phone trying to convince the doctor, Janie walked the five blocks to the clinic. The receptionist recognized her, since Janie had been a patient for the last six

months, and smiled at her. Jessica was young, in her mid-twenties; with long brown hair worn loose, flowing down her back. The cotton skirt that fell to mid-calf looked like a patchwork quilt, the matching vest worn over a white blouse. A bright green headband completed the hippy look.

“Why Janie! It hasn’t been six weeks yet, has it? I don’t have you down for an appointment.”

“No, I don’t have an appointment,” Janie told her. “But I need to see Dr. Ellen. It... it’s very important.”

“Oh, I wish you had called before you came down here, hon. Dr. Goodman is all booked up today... over-booked, actually. This isn’t an emergency, is it? Do you have a fever or is your flow too heavy?”

“No, it’s not anything like that. I... I just need to see her. Jessica, I...” Janie glanced back at the waiting room full of women, most of them pregnant. She lowered her voice and leaned closer. “I changed my mind about giving my baby up for adoption. I want to keep her. And I have to talk to the doctor right now.”

Jessica’s eyes widened and she reached for the phone. “Let me just see if she’s in her office, OK?” Janie nodded and straightened, taking a deep breath as the other woman spoke quietly into the phone. She was silent for a moment, listening. “All right, Doctor,” she said and hung up the phone. “She said you can go back to her office, but she only has a couple of minutes before she has to see her next patient.”

“Thank you,” Janie said with relief.

As she walked down the hall, Janie remembered sitting in Dr. Goodman’s office six months earlier, discussing the adoption that she now regretted. She entered the office. The doctor was sitting behind a large oak desk. She stood up and smiled tightly, her gray eyes cold. Her thick auburn hair was pulled up into a bun to keep it out of her way as she worked. She was tall, and thin, her posture ramrod straight. She wore a white lab coat over a short-sleeved green dress. Dr. Goodman motioned Janie to a chair on the other side of the desk.

“All right, Janie,” she said. “I only have a minute. What can I do for you?”

“It’s just what I’ve been telling you on the phone, Doctor. I want my baby back.”

Dr. Goodman sighed impatiently. “And as I’ve been telling you, it isn’t that simple. This couple has been planning for this baby. They’ve spent a lot of money on supplies as well as for your medical care and living expenses.”

“I’ll pay them back.”

“You’re 16, Janie. You haven’t even finished high school. How do you expect to pay them back?”

“I... I don’t know. But I’ll do it. I know I’ll only be able to pay them a little at a time, but I’ll pay it all back.”

“What if they decide to fight you in court? How will you pay for a lawyer?”

Janie’s eyes filled with tears. “I don’t know. But I’ll do whatever I have to do to get my baby back. Maybe...” She hesitated, taking a deep breath before continuing. “Maybe I’ll ask the father of the baby for help. He has money.”

The doctor’s face twisted with anger and she leaned across the desk, her hands planted on the green blotter. Janie shrank back in her chair. She had never seen the doctor like this. In all the months she had cared for Janie she had been kind and gentle, expressing an almost motherly concern with what was best for Janie and her baby. This cold, angry woman frightened the teenager.

“As I recall,” the doctor was saying, “the father of the baby is your brother-in-law.” Janie nodded wordlessly. “And how old were you when the two of you began having sex?”

Janie looked at her feet as tears overflowed and streaked down her cheeks. “Th... thirteen.”

“And you were 15 when you became pregnant.” Dr. Goodman paused and looked at her sternly. “So your brother-in-law is guilty of molesting a minor, something I was legally required to report when you first came to me. The only reason I didn’t do that was out of concern for you. You didn’t want him, or anyone else, to know about the baby. You said you wanted the child to go to a good home and then you wanted to go somewhere and start a new life. That’s what you told me, isn’t it?”

Again Janie nodded without looking at her.

“So, after I risked my medical license for you, now you want to bring him into this? And do you think he’s going to admit to fathering your baby and help you get custody? He will be too busy fighting criminal charges. Is that what you want, Janie? Do you want him in jail? Do you want me to go to jail?”

“No.” Janie covered her face with her hands and sobbed. “I just want my baby.”

“You want your baby and you don’t care about the consequences.” Dr. Goodman straightened and sat down in her chair. “You don’t care anything about the couple who will be heartbroken or about the money they paid you. You don’t care about sending me to jail after all I’ve done for you. You don’t care about all the other women who will be left without a doctor if this clinic closes. You don’t care about sending your brother-in-law to jail or what will happen to your sister? You don’t even care about tearing your baby away from a stable family and a good life.

“I think you’re overlooking something else,” the doctor continued. “Suppose your brother-in-law doesn’t go to jail? He has money and influential friends. Maybe he’ll just get a slap on the wrist. Do you really think he’s going to help you keep that baby? He has a home and a family. How difficult do you think it will be for him to convince a judge that the baby is better off with him than with a teenage mother who doesn’t even have any way to support herself?”

For several long moments the only sound heard in that office was Janie’s weeping. Dr. Goodman was right. How could she think of trying to fight the adoptive couple, or her brother-in-law?

Especially him. She couldn't let him have her precious baby. Maybe she should just leave her where she was. Maybe that was the best thing for her.

Janie felt the now familiar tingling that signaled the "let down" of her breast milk. She had put pads inside her bra to protect her clothes and she could feel the dampness as the milk dripped from her nipples. No, she thought. She couldn't give up now. This milk meant something. She had been so sure that God sent the milk because she was meant to keep her baby. If God had provided the food for her baby, then surely he would provide for everything else. Janie just needed to be strong. She wiped her wet cheeks and looked up at the doctor.

"I want my baby," she said firmly, standing up. "I want her and I know that God wants me to have her." The doctor narrowed her eyes and Janie fought to keep her fear from her voice. "I know the law, Dr. Ellen, I read about adoption at the library. It isn't final yet and I still have time to change my mind. That's what I'm doing; I'm changing my mind. You don't have a right to keep my baby away from me. If you don't get her back and give her to me, I'm going to go to the police."

"The police?" Dr. Goodman asked.

"Yes. I read all about adoptions and I don't think the papers you made me sign are even legal. I think you made those people pay you money for my baby, and I think I'm not the only one. I think you sold my baby and I think you did it to other girls, too. And if you don't give me my baby back, I'm going to tell the police."

Dr. Goodman held her gaze for a moment and then her expression softened. She smiled at Janie and suddenly she didn't look scary. She looked like the same kind and caring doctor Janie had trusted for all those months.

"All right, Janie. I can see how determined you are and how much you love your baby. Maybe the two of you are going to be fine, after all. I will take care of this and get your baby back."

"When," she asked breathlessly.

"Tomorrow. You go back to the apartment and I'll make all the arrangements. I'll bring your baby to you tomorrow."

Janie thanked the doctor profusely and left the clinic. On the way back to the apartment, she stopped to buy some diapers and a few blankets and clothes for the baby. She wasn't sure what she would need, but thought that would get her started. After all, she thought smugly, she certainly had milk to feed the baby.

Janie turned off the pump and cleaned up, putting the milk she had expressed into containers that went into the freezer. It was a day after her visit to the doctor. Today... she almost sang the word out loud. Today she would hold her baby again. Never again would she allow anyone to separate them, she vowed. She had been thinking of names, trying to decide what to call her daughter. Rachel was at the top of the list.

She remembered the things Dr. Goodman said about her brother-in-law the day before. She was

right; he would not help her. Neither would her sister. When he began molesting her, he had warned her not to tell anyone, especially her sister. He said that she would not believe her and Janie would just end up living on the streets with no place to go. She had always wondered if her sister knew what he was doing. When Janie finally told her that she was pregnant, her sister didn't seem surprised and Janie realized she must have known.

Her sister warned her not to tell anyone about her pregnancy, especially her brother-in-law. So many secrets and Janie was in the center of them all. Her sister arranged for her to go to a home for teenage mothers in New York. She bought a plane ticket... one way from Los Angeles to New York. She also bought a bus ticket from Fresno to Los Angeles. After her brother-in-law left for work one morning, her sister had driven her to the bus station.

She hadn't even waited for Janie to get on a bus. She told her to call after "it" had been adopted, and then she would send a ticket for her to return home. She gave her some cash and drove away, leaving Janie in front of the bus station with her bags. Standing there watching her sister drive away, she was suddenly filled with rage and humiliation. She wasn't going to return to that house, to be used by *him* and ignored by her own sister. She wasn't going to New York, either, and she certainly didn't want *his* baby. Janie had heard rumors about Dr. Goodman, and that she could help girls like her.

She went to a pay phone and called for a cab to take her to Dr. Goodman's clinic. She arrived with all of her bags and without an appointment, but Jessica had assured her that the doctor would work her in. Before being examined, Janie sat in Dr. Goodman's office, soothed by the sympathy the doctor exuded and her outrage over the abuse Janie had suffered from her brother-in-law.

They discussed her options. Abortion was illegal but the doctor hinted it could be done. Janie was too afraid of all the stories she had heard of women dying, so that was dropped. Dr. Goodman told her that she could arrange for the baby to be adopted privately, and even offered her a place to stay until she gave birth.

The idea of the baby, *his* baby, being adopted by someone in Fresno appealed to her. She would be gone; she had a friend in Washington state who was already 18 and Janie was sure she could stay with her. But that baby would be here, growing up nearby. Maybe even adopted by someone who knew her sister and brother-in-law. They might see the baby growing up and never know it was his. She told the doctor she wanted to give the baby up for adoption.

During her pregnancy, she lived in the apartment provided by the doctor. There were three apartments together, all owned by Dr. Goodman's women's clinic. She told Janie it was for girls like her, with nowhere to go and no family to help them. She took care of the girls and the adoptive parents paid for their living expenses until they delivered. The doctor took care of everything, making sure they had plenty of healthy food, and insisted they go for daily walks. They were allowed to stay until they had their six-week check-up and the doctor said they had recovered.

Each apartment was small; a small living room, small kitchen, three small bedrooms, and one small bathroom. They were plain and sparsely furnished with used furniture. The walls were

white, the carpet a bland high-low beige. There was a television in each apartment, as well as a selection of books and old magazines... rather like the doctor's waiting room. Each bedroom had a twin bed and small dresser.

There had been other girls living in the apartments when Janie moved in, one in hers and two in each of the other apartments. But they had all delivered their babies and were now gone, leaving Janie alone. She hadn't wanted the baby, *his* baby, when she moved in here. But as her belly grew and she felt the baby moving inside her, she began to regret that she would never know her. When she saw her and held her for those brief moments after giving birth, she did not see *him*, she just saw her precious baby and her heart broke.

She didn't know when Dr. Goodman would arrive with the baby and she jumped every time a car drove by. She cleaned the breast pump and sat it on the counter. She smiled at the thought that beginning today it would be her baby... her Rachel... suckling milk from her breasts.

She looked at herself in the mirror, smoothing her hands over her shirt and looking at herself critically. It was silly, she knew, to worry about her looks. The baby wouldn't care. She frowned at the extra weight she still carried from the pregnancy. She had always been small and slim and she hoped it wouldn't take long to lose the extra pounds. She sighed at her large brown eyes and short brunette hair that framed her face in a blunt cut. It had been long when she first came here and had been long for all of her life. A few months earlier she had it cut short. She wondered if she should change from her jeans and shirt into a dress. After all, this was a special occasion.

A knock at the door made her jump. Her hand went to her chest as her heart beat faster. This was it; she was going to hold her baby in her arms. She took a deep breath as she opened the door, smiling with excitement. But her smile faded when she realized Dr. Goodman was standing there... alone.

"Wh... where's my baby?" she asked, her voice quavering with disappointment.

"She will be here soon," the doctor said, stepping into the small apartment. "My lawyer is picking her up."

"Oh." Janie closed the door as Dr. Goodman looked around. "Was the other couple upset?"

"Upset?" The doctor turned and looked at her. "Yes... yes, they're upset. They've had her for three weeks now; they've grown to love her."

"Oh," Janie said softly. "I'm sorry for them... but I know this is the right thing to do."

"What is this?" Dr. Goodman was pointing at the breast pump sitting on the counter. "Have you been pumping breast milk?"

"Yes," Janie told her. "My milk came in, even though you gave me that shot. That's how I knew that God wanted me to keep my baby."

Dr. Goodman sighed and closed her eyes for a moment.

“Janie, if you had told me about your milk coming in I would have explained that it happens sometimes. But it goes away soon, as long as it’s not being stimulated to produce more.”

“No, I know it’s a sign. God wanted me to know it was wrong to give her away. God wants Rachel to be with me.”

“Rachel?”

“That’s what I’m going to name her. Rachel.”

Dr. Goodman studied the girl for a moment.

“I really wish that you would just let this go, Janie. The baby is in a good home, with parents who love her and can give her a good life.”

“No.” Janie shook her head stubbornly. “Rachel is my baby and I want her. And God wants her to be with me.”

Dr. Goodman sighed in resignation.

“All right, Janie, it’s your choice. I just hope you’re ready for the consequences of your decision.”

“I am,” she assured her.

Another knock at the door elicited a gasp from Janie and her eyes widened. She looked at Dr. Goodman, who nodded encouragingly.

“Open the door, Janie. Your future is here.”

Janie hurried to the door and pulled it open. A tall, powerfully-built man with a receding hairline stood there. He wasn’t holding a baby. Janie glanced past him to see if someone was with him, but there wasn’t anybody else. She turned toward Dr. Goodman with questioning eyes.

Something smashed into her from behind at the same time that she heard the door slam closed. She sprawled onto the floor face first and a heavy weight dropped onto her back, knocking the breath out of her. Before she could react she was pulled roughly to her knees. Her right arm was twisted painfully behind her back and the man knelt behind her, his arm across her throat, holding her tightly against him. She clawed at his arm with her left hand, but couldn’t budge it. She opened her mouth to scream and Dr. Goodman was suddenly there, silencing her with a strip of duct tape. Janie tried to free her legs, but the man’s thighs squeezed hers into an iron grip.

Dr. Goodman towered over her as she grabbed her chin and tilted her head back so that Janie’s terror-filled eyes were looking at her.

“Did you really think,” she said coldly, “that I was going to let you destroy everything I’ve worked for?”

Janie whimpered behind the tape and tears trailed down her face.

“All you had to do was take the money your sister gave you and the money I would have given you and go away. Go start a new life somewhere. Instead, you had to get this ridiculous idea that God wants you to keep your baby. And then you threaten me. Me! You stupid little bitch!”

Janie released her grip on the man’s arm and grabbed the doctor’s wrist, but she easily shook it off. Dr. Goodman straightened and walked over to where her purse sat on the kitchen table. She pulled something from it. Janie moaned and renewed her efforts to dislodge the man’s arm when she saw a syringe in the doctor’s hand.

Dr. Goodman walked back over and knelt in front of her. Janie flailed at her with her free hand, but Dr. Goodman held the syringe between her teeth and roughly grabbed Janie’s arm and forced it between her left arm and her body, holding it immobile. Ignoring Janie’s muffled sobs she grasped the syringe in her hand and used her teeth to pull the cap off.

“This was your choice, Janie,” she said as she expertly slid the needle into a vein in Janie’s arm.

Dr. Goodman stared at the dead girl, limp in Angelo’s arms. She didn’t want to do this, but Janie left her no choice. She wasn’t going to lose everything she had worked so hard for. She certainly wasn’t going to jail.

“This is it,” she said. “I’m done. I’m not doing this anymore. It’s not worth it.”

Angelo dropped the dead girl on the floor and stood to put his arms around Ellen.

“You should have left it to me,” he told her. “I would have taken care of it for you.”

“No,” she sighed, leaning her head against his shoulder. “I needed to do this. It was my responsibility.” She closed her eyes and shook her head. “Why didn’t she just do what she was supposed to do?”

“Some people just can’t be reasoned with.”

“Well, this won’t happen again. I’m going to stop. No more ‘private adoptions.’ My clinic is doing well. Who knows... maybe abortion will even be legal soon. Then I will be completely legitimate and not have to worry about stupid teenagers with big mouths.”

Angelo chuckled and kissed her. “Yes, both of us can be respectable and legal.”

She hugged him and then stepped away, all business again.

“OK, what do we do next?”

“You go back to work, babe, and leave this to me. This is my specialty. If anyone comes looking for her, they won’t find anything.”

“I doubt that anyone will look for her. Certainly not her family.” She kissed him on the cheek.

“Thank you for everything, Angelo. I don’t know what I would do without you.”

Ellen picked up her purse, took one more look at the dead girl, and walked out of the apartment.

