
THE WAY OUT

The Proposal Series, Book One

ANNE POWELL



Published by Blushing Books
An Imprint of
ABCD Graphics and Design, Inc.
A Virginia Corporation
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901

©2020
All rights reserved.

No part of the book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. The trademark Blushing Books is pending in the US Patent and Trademark Office.

Anne Powell
The Way Out

eBook ISBN: 978-1-64563-636-6
Print ISBN: 978-1-64563-659-5
Audio ISBN: 978-1-64563-660-1

vi

Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only. Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

Sara caught the distasteful gaze of her professor out of the corner of her eye. When she turned her head to acknowledge his nonverbal communication, his eyes turned dark. He had a look about him which said, ‘Either you wake yourself up, or you walk yourself out of this class’.

Sara decided to walk out. She packed up her bag and gracefully walked down the long aisle between the rows of seats. She gently pushed open the lecture hall door and let herself out. She hadn’t intended to fall asleep during the lecture, but lately, she hadn’t been sleeping well. She often had nightmares or night terrors that consumed her, and regretfully, they usually included aspects of the dark fantasies that were buried within her. Sara’s nightmares began at home before she graduated from high school and after she lost her mother.

Her mother, Maddison and her stepfather, Jack Walkins, had a good marriage for the first year or two they spent together. Her mother had met Jack a year after Sara’s birth father had passed.

Her father's death was sudden, caused by a large brain tumor that went unnoticed for many years.

Maddison had married Jack on the rebound. She was distraught at losing her chance for a happily ever after. That's what Jonas had been to her. They'd meant everything to one another. After he passed, Maddison wasn't the same. She slept with multiple men and didn't always come home. Sara had been fourteen when her father died, only fourteen when she learned she had to care for herself.

Sara never blamed her mother for her actions. She'd lost her soul mate. Everyone coped with loss in different ways. When Sara's grandparents had passed, her mother had gone on an eating binge and put on ten pounds. Sara understood how detrimental death could be, not just to the dead, but to the living.

Maddison and Jack only dated briefly before tying the knot. If Sara remembered correctly, they dated for approximately six months. Sara didn't care for Jack. He looked at her eerily... always staring at her, his eyes piercing holes into her skin. There was something off about him from the beginning, but she could never pinpoint it.

Sara tried to avoid him as much as possible, and she only ever spent time with him when her mother was present. She just had a bad feeling about him. Jack always appeared cold and distant as if he did not care about anyone but himself. He was a selfish person, at least in Sara's eyes, constantly doing things that made him happy rather than thinking about Sara's mother.

Sara's father had always been warm, passionate, and kind, and he had loved her mother dearly. Sara could sense the differences between Jack and her real father, and she didn't like it. She wouldn't say anything to her mother, mostly because there was nothing really to say. Other than being distant and selfish, Jack had never done anything truly abhorrent. Her mother seemed happy, and because Jack was the one to bring her happiness, Sara kept her thoughts to herself.

The Way Out

Shortly before Sara's seventeenth birthday, in her grade eleven-year, Jack's attitude took a turn for the worse. Jack became physical towards her mother, slapping her, hitting her, whenever she didn't answer him the way he wanted, or when she didn't do something he'd asked her to do. Neither Sara nor Maddison knew what prompted this behavior because there had been no prior signs that would point to him having an abusive personality. Yet, his violent behavior went on for quite a while.

Her mother would leave home with bruises sometimes, and Sara became accustomed to yelling at Jack, and separating them when the fighting became unbearable. She did not understand why her mother stayed with Jack. It was clear either the love was gone, or it was never there to begin with. She knew Jack hated her, and wanted to hurt her, but her mother never let him near her.

Eventually, Maddison found out he had been drinking heavily. She tried to blame his behavior on the drink, but Sara didn't believe it. He was violent because he wanted to be. He had a need for power, and he fulfilled that need by hurting those around him. He must have always been this way and was simply good at hiding it. There were a few times when he took a swing at Sara when she wouldn't or couldn't tell him when Maddison was coming home. Luckily, he had been too drunk to punch her or hurt her, and she was able to get away.

After a short while, Maddison's attitude started to change. She returned to her promiscuous ways, leaving the house at odd hours, sometimes not returning at all. She blamed her absences on work and travel, but Sara knew she rarely traveled for her job. Maddison worked for the Vice President of a food distribution company, as a personal assistant.

Jack became suspicious, watching her leave from the bedroom window, sometimes following her when she would leave the house. Sara didn't blame her mother. Jack had this coming. They started to argue more frequently, and Sara would sit at the

top of the stairs leading to the foyer, to see if she could make out their words. She didn't feel bad about eavesdropping. She needed to know if she had to come down the stairs to intervene. Those stairs became her hiding place.

One day, Jack left the house, shortly after Maddison. From what Sara knew, Jack followed her to another man's home. She was having an affair, and he caught her in bed with him. Jack beat the guy up pretty bad, at least that was Jack's side of the story.

Maddison swore up and down she had only been intimate with the man once. Jack didn't believe her. Sara would sit and listen to their fights from the top of the stairs, and she knew her mother was lying. Her mother wasn't the one-night-stand kind of woman. If she was sleeping with someone, it would happen more than once. Sara could attest to that because before Jack came along, her mother received phone calls from the same men over and over. There were many men, but she rarely saw a man's name on the telephone screen she hadn't come to recognize.

Shortly after the huge blow-up about the affair, things died down for a while. Maddison would still sneak out of the house, but not nearly as often, and she was much more careful. Jack continued to drink, and eventually, he started to find ways to hurt Sara when her mother wasn't around.

He never injured her face. She never had wounds on visible parts of her body, unless you counted her arms. She always had bruises on her arms from where he would grab her. She did tell her mother, but her mother simply told her to stay in her room while she was out. After a few heart-to-heart conversations with her mother, begging and pleading her to leave Jack, Maddison promised to visit a divorce lawyer and have him out of the house during Sara's last year of high school. She said they would take a trip to Paris, and while they were gone, she would arrange to have him escorted out. When they would return, they would come home to an empty house, and fill it with love and happiness

again. Unfortunately, she was never able to make good on that promise.

During Sara's last year of high school, right after she turned eighteen, her mother went missing. Sara never had the opportunity to celebrate the memorable birthday with her mother, and she would forever regret it. Maddison had left the house early in the morning on a summer day, sun shining in the sky, and she didn't return. This wasn't completely unusual, so no one expected foul play until the following evening when she still hadn't returned home. Jack didn't think there was anything to worry about, because he figured she was out screwing someone and would come home when she was good and ready. Sara knew something was wrong, and she went to the police station. A missing person's report was filed, and the police located Maddison's phone by using a tracking device that had been installed by Jack. Sara knew about this because she had overheard the police speaking to Jack about it when they located Maddison's phone, but couldn't find her body.

Both Jack and Sara were called into the police station. They were each questioned about her mother's possible whereabouts. Jack was all too quick to mention the man she was supposedly sleeping with. Jack couldn't even remember where the man lived, even though he had been the one to follow her there. Sara wanted to focus on her mother's disappearance. She wondered if it was possible her mother left, to get away from Jack. But would she really leave Sara all alone? Sara hated the thoughts that swirled in her head. But she couldn't shake them. Perhaps if she used this opportunity to tell the police about Jack... her mother could come home – home to a house without Jack.

When the police spoke with her privately, she gave them any information she could about her mother's potential whereabouts. Then, she started telling about Jack's abuse, how he hurt her mother, hurt her, would drink, and become violent. She even told the police her mother may have ran away

because of this and she may return home if Jack were gone. The police informed her because she had no bruises to show, no evidence, it would be her word against his. The police didn't believe her story. They called in a social worker to conduct a few tests. The social worker examined her thoroughly, the police checked the databases for previous arrests of Jack Walkins, reports about domestic abuse and they found nothing.

They did not believe her. Sara thought it would be customary for them to place her in foster care or something, but they didn't. When she asked, they refused, explaining since she was eighteen, she was legally an adult and could move out if she felt Jack was a threat. Sara felt both abandoned and frustrated by their indifference to her situation. She couldn't just move out. She had no money, nowhere to go, what if her mother came home to find Sara had run away?

When they arrived back home, Sara realized Jack knew what she had told the police. He was angry. She saw a look in his eyes she had never seen before.

"You trying to get me in trouble? You want me out? I am the best thing that ever happened to your mother and if she is gone, then you'll live under my rules."

Sara discovered his 'rules' included assaulting her. She was mortified and devastated. It took her weeks to heal from his bruises, and at least a month before she was able to go to the washroom without pain. She took a week off school until her bruises had faded enough, they could be covered with makeup. She stayed at Bonnie's for the next while.

She didn't know why he'd done what he did to her. She was confused and she was broken. She tried to pretend like it didn't happen. She treated it like a bad dream. But deep down... she knew it wasn't a dream. She thought about going to the police, but she was scared, scared of them not believing her again. She didn't want anyone to think it was consensual. She couldn't risk

The Way Out

having people look at her with pity. She wouldn't allow it. She would internalize her bruises, her shame.

Sara would sit in the park close to her house when Jack was at home, and a few times she fell asleep there. She tried to stay out of the house as often as possible. She knew she could handle it because soon, she would be attending university. She would be free... soon.

Jack's ruthless behavior continued for months and it was during this time Sara devised and perfected her escape route from the stairs to the bedroom and out the window. She had a rough time at school. She had issues keeping her grades up, but she knew she needed to so she could get into a university and hopefully find a way to move out.

Her mother had been missing for months. Eventually, the police declared her dead. They found some sort of remains, which they identified as Maddison Hopewell's. They never found her actual body, and they never found her killer. They did rule her death as murder, but they had no other leads. The police suspected her promiscuous behavior had her surrounded by dangerous people – the wrong kind of people.

The anger, frustration, sadness, and despair Sara felt during that time was immense. She was angry with her mother for leaving her. She was sad she had lost her last real parent. She was in despair because she was going to be stuck with Jack until she found a way out. She was angry at being weak, and not going to the police immediately after the assault. She was frustrated the police hadn't done their job finding her mother alive. Sara was angry.

Jack hadn't had a job when he met Maddison, and he still didn't have one. He was on some disability allowance he received every month, and he used most of it to go out drinking. He normally didn't return home until much later in the afternoon. So, Sara would do her homework on those stairs, the top stair, and sometimes, she would wait there for hours.

Sara never talked to anyone about Jack. Only Bonnie. She talked to Bonnie. She would sleep over at Bonnie's every chance she had, so long as she knew Jack wouldn't make a big deal about it. When he wasn't drinking, he was only half terrible to be around. She could handle him when he wasn't drinking. It was when he was drinking she had to be worried.

Bonnie tried to force Sara to go to the police. Sara completely refused, listing every reason under the sun, and eventually, they moved onto plan B. They were going to apply to University and rely on the government financial aid. Her mother's inheritance would only be released to her once she turned twenty-one – coinciding with her final year of university. They would have to make it through until then.

It was around this time, during her last year of high school, just when she thought things couldn't get any worse at home... she met Tom. Tom saved her. At least for a little while.

It's an amazing thing what pain and torment can do to a person. The pain of what you've endured can be so excruciating, so unbearable, you allow your mind to enter a dream-like state. In this dream-state, you allow all your hurt, all your anguish... to disappear. You push the pain so far away from your physical body it no longer exists. You create a life where your past has no meaning, and no say, in what you do. You build walls for safety, and you allow yourself to pretend no part of you is damaged.

Which is exactly what Sara had done. She hadn't realized it had already been a year. An entire year away, alone, far from Tom. It felt like a century ago that he had her, his hands on her, all over her.

Sara remembered a time when all she had wanted was his hands on her. Now, the thought of such a thing repulsed her – sent shivers down her spine. She hated herself for feeling

The Way Out

anything for him at all. But... Tom had saved her, from a different kind of pain. For a while, he was her white knight, dressed in armor. It was too late when she came to the realization he was simply a boy in tin foil. Yet, she had to admit it wasn't all bad.

Tom introduced her to a world where pain was part of pleasure, the two intertwined, inseparable. That world became her world, and for a time... she liked it. Unfortunately, it wasn't long before all he left her with was pain. Singular, excruciating pain.