

**Psycho Sarah**  
By Toni Press-Coffman

**PART ONE**

**I Know How Lucky I Am**

**SARAH.**

12 Step meetings are inevitable. I mean, they're inevitable if you're serious about getting clean. I mean, they're inevitable if you're serious about getting clean and you're me and you know you can't do it without a program. [A smile.] I know what you're thinking. You're thinking I'm putting myself down – that I'm saying some people have more willpower or more courage or more chutzpah or more something I didn't have so I couldn't do it without help but some people can. (beat) What I mean is I didn't think I could do it without that kind of help **specifically**. Because my journey is about coming to believe I'm not a freak. Coming to believe if I'm a teenage girl who gets high or drunk or – usually – both, and then has sex with whoever wants to or whoever is around or whoever thinks I'm pretty – I mean whoever **says** he thinks I'm pretty but really he's a loser in his 20s who's figured out teenage girls are so vulnerable that compliments are sometimes the best way to their vaginas. Not to their hearts 'cause the kind of guy I'm talking about has nothing to do with hearts, his own or anybody else's. So I specifically needed to sit in a room and look at people in their faces and listen to their stories so I could start to believe I'm not some freak and stop believing that no other 16 year old girl would act that way and no other teenage girl would fuck the guys she worked with on a boat in Alaska and get drunk with them and then one of them ran her underwear up a line. Only a freak would do that, right? (to herself as though back in that moment) What are you doing right now, Sarah, right this second? Who is this guy, what's this guy's name, do I know this guy? (pause) Am I on the boat?

Oh, yeah. I must be on the boat. (looking up) There's my underwear.

Nobody gets clean without some kind of help and anyone who thinks he can get clean without some kind of help is never gonna get clean. Not really. Maybe for a minute but that's all. Just – there are other ways. Not everyone needs a program. But for me, I would have died without it. On the other hand, I could have died with the program. I met the woman who became my best friend in Alaska – in the meetings - her name was Sandy. She had 23 years clean. She relapsed and ran off the road and died in a car accident, her body full of drugs. She wouldn't mind me telling you her name. I mean, she can't mind. She's dead.

The meetings were like a massive fleet of tether lines keeping us grounded. Addicts. Sandy just – untethered herself. Who knows why. She'd say all we know is what we have in common. We don't know about anybody else's personal demons, and that's true but you forget that. You feel strong, you feel tethered, you feel grounded, you feel empowered. So. I'm six months clean and there's a guy in the Alaska group. Chris. He doesn't come around for a while and we all wonder, we all have each other's backs so we all wonder. And then he calls me. I used, he says. I used, I used, I used. I'm messed up, Sarah. Will you . . .? I mean. I mean, I forgot and how could I forget but I forgot that addicts lie. We all lie. So of course. I ask him where he is and I go and pick him up. He's so grateful. We talk and we talk. We're in the program together. We have each other's back. I'm wary. Usually it comes down to some guy wanting to screw me, but this time it doesn't. It's all – thank you, Sarah. Good-night. He sleeps on my couch. I sleep in my bed.

In the morning, he's gone. I'm really bummed because I think – because I've been there – so I feel terrible for him because he knows he screwed up and he just can't face me this morning. And then a couple hours later I'm ready to get on with my day and that's when I realize that my car is gone.

Only it's my father's car. Dad was away. I was terrified waiting for him to come back. I wanted a drink, obviously. Or an Ativan. But I didn't use. To me, Dad said, "What the fuck were you thinking? You OF ALL PEOPLE . . ." (Translation: Aren't you supposed to know how addicts think, dumbass?) To the cops, Dad said, "You find my fucking car!" He didn't say this. He more *screamed* this at the cops and they did. It took them a week, but the cops did find his fucking car. Once Dad got his car back, I took every drug I had in my medicine cabinet – Prozac and Lithium and Depakote and others whose names I don't remember. I took them all.

You're thinking, you call that lucky? I do call that lucky. I didn't die.