

Chapter One

'Childhood'

August 1988 ~ to ~ August 2005

My Birth ~ to ~ 17 years old

Norwich

I was born in Norwich, England, in the summer of 1988.

My parents divorced shortly after my birth.

My big brother, big sister, and I, stayed at our mum's house during the week and spent weekends at our dad's house, until he moved to Nottingham when I was thirteen.

My mum evicted my elder siblings and me shortly after our respective 16th birthdays.

She justified this by saying we each displayed unmanageable behavioural issues, but I think we were just being typical teenagers. My brother, the eldest, was the first to go. He was rehoused into a council flat in Norwich, but after a year there, he moved into a bungalow in Norwich with our dad.

One night, my dad came home drunk and burnt the bungalow down while deep-frying chips. My brother rescued him. My dad later used the insurance money from the fire to fulfil a lifelong dream of living on a canal boat in Nottingham. My brother enrolled at university there, and my sister also moved to Nottingham.

Before they left, I was a member of St John Ambulance. I also worked hard, taking on seven paper rounds and setting up a local car-washing business, which involved knocking on neighbours' doors with a bucket and sponge. After they left, I fell in with a bad crowd at school, which led to me bunking off, smoking cigarettes and weed, drinking alcohol, getting suspended from school, and being arrested by the police for juvenile crimes.



My mum used my behaviour to justify having me rehoused by the council on my 16th birthday, but I wasn't bothered. It left me free to seek out my dad and siblings in Nottingham.

On the morning of my 16th, I walked downstairs, gave my mum a goodbye cuddle, and then picked up my eviction letter off the dining room table — exactly where I knew it would be. She'd left my siblings' eviction letters in the same place.

A social worker arrived, helped me carry my bags to her car, and drove me to a bed and breakfast on the opposite side of Norwich.

Shortly before my 17th birthday, I accepted an invitation from my sister to move to Nottingham to live with her and her husband.