

## Chapter Two

### ‘Glad I moved when I did’

**August 2005 ~ to ~ February 2007**

**17 years old ~ to ~ 18 years & 6 months old**

### Nottingham

During my first week in Nottingham, I got a job as a waiter at the local pub. The role bored me, but it paid the bills. I enjoyed living with my sister until I discovered that her husband, Gary, was a violent drunk.

One Friday night, I had the house to myself because my sister and Gary were out drinking in town. I was relaxing on the sofa, watching TV and eating takeaway pizza, when I received a text message from my sister that read:

*"Sam, leave the house immediately! Gary's drunk, we've had an argument. He told me he's on his way home to hurt you... to hurt me."*

In a panic, I scrambled to find my shoes, keys, coat, and wallet. I ran to the pub where I worked and told my boss what was happening, and he hid me in the back garden.

Twenty minutes later, my boss came outside and told me that Gary had come looking for me. After being told I wasn't there, he left and started staggering back home. My sister wasn't answering her phone, so I decided to head home because I was worried about her.

As I approached the house, I heard Gary shouting. When I walked inside, I was relieved to see him being pinned to the floor by two of his friends, Simon and Tom. The police spoke to Gary, and everyone eventually went to bed.

After my sister had been kicked out of home at age sixteen, she moved into the pub where she worked. After a romantic relationship turned abusive, she fled to Nottingham to be with my brother and dad. Later, she met Gary, who introduced her to the adult industry. I was proud of her for being so successful in her career.

For me, the best part of living in Nottingham was fishing on my dad's canal boat at weekends. He also taught me how to drive the boat. I enjoyed riding on the back of his motorbike to local DIY stores as he improved his boat. He was a jack-of-all-trades, the type of man you'd want with you if you were stuck on a desert island because he could fix almost anything. If he didn't know how to do something, he'd get a book on the subject and learn, though he wasn't nerdy at all—more of a bruiser.

He was tough but loved his kids more than anything in the world. Sadly, he also had a demon inside him, but despite this, he still managed to be the best father a kid could ask for.

During my first eighteen months in Nottingham, I didn't see or hear of my dad touching a drop of alcohol. My siblings told me he'd been doing extremely well even before I arrived. However, this all changed one Saturday morning when I found him lying on the street, drunk, near the boat. I helped him onto the boat, and he explained that I was now the captain. He handed me the keys and ordered me to start the engine. I told him the boat wasn't going anywhere with a drunken crew, and he slapped me. He then told me to hit him back, but I refused. He went on to say he'd deliberately gotten drunk to show me what he was really like deep down. I immediately left the boat, caught the bus home, and called my brother, who went to look after him instead.

A few days later, I told my sister I didn't want to visit our dad anymore. She reminded me of a few things: he loved me dearly, what happened was a one-off, and he'd been sober for so long. I continued my weekly visits. As far as I knew, he stayed sober.

One Saturday morning, I spontaneously called my dad to cancel my visit because I wanted some time at home. Just as I was about to say goodbye, I heard a loud clanking noise caused by his boat's engine malfunctioning. He needed me to help tow the boat back to the spot on the canal where he'd made his home. My dad had a bad hip from years of working on pneumatic drills and was awaiting an operation, so I couldn't leave him to do it alone.

Another time, I lied to my dad, telling him I had to work. He believed me.

A few days later, when I called to arrange my next visit, his phone was off, which was unusual because his phone was never off. I thought maybe his phone just needed charging. The next day, I called again, but his phone was still off. Worried, I decided to visit him. The bus ride felt much longer than usual—every stop seemed to take forever.

When I arrived at the canal, I noticed the mooring ropes on his boat were slack, a sign it hadn't moved in a while. My stomach sank. As I boarded, I called out to him, but there was no response.

I cautiously peered through the door, which was slightly ajar, and saw him on the floor at the other end of the boat, kneeling with his head in his arms. I rushed over and touched him, but he was as cold as ice—like touching marble on a winter's day. His demon rushed up my arm.

***I'll bear no sons or daughters. I'll not let addiction go down another generation.***

I quickly grabbed his duvet and wrapped it around him. His face was hidden in his hands, thankfully—I don't think I could have forgotten it otherwise. Moments later, it hit me—he was dead.

I went outside, called an ambulance, and then my sister. I sat on the grass and cried.

My sister arrived first, and we hugged. She hesitantly asked if she should go inside the boat. I said yes because I thought it would help her get closure.

Finally, the ambulance arrived, and they took his body away.

My sister and I went to a nearby pub, where we called my brother to break the devastating news.

We later found out that my dad had passed away from natural causes.