

CHAPTER 2

Born into Deceit

The adulteress waits for the twilight, Saying, "No one will see me then." She hides her face so no one will know her.

Job 24:15 (NLT)

Mine is a story of brokenness and deliverance. It illuminates a journey from sorrow to glory. It's a story of God's unending and patient pursuit of me and His longing for my return. Ultimately, it was a quest whose sole purpose was to return to and glorify Him, and in the end, discover Holy Love.

*I will give them hearts that recognize me as the Lord.
They will be my people, and I will be their God,
for they will return to me wholeheartedly.*

Jeremiah 24:7 (NLT)

Someone asked me what I meant by the words *return to Him*. We are His creation, and it is a personal and intentional relationship He desires with us. Hence, my life is an illustration of the return to my first love. Thus, the psalmist describes the intimacy which God had with him:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full

well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalm 139: 13-16 (NIV)

From birth I was cast on you: from my mother's womb you have been my God.

Psalm 22:10 (NIV)



May 13, 1954, is the moment of my biological birth. Mine was an unplanned pregnancy to parents who loved me dearly. It was unplanned because my mother was still adjusting to motherhood with a nine-month-old.

Motherhood did not come with ease for my mother. It could not have been an easy path for her. I know this because my mother was

an adulteress. How could a woman not struggle when she is living two separate lives?

I was the middle child of a suburban Jewish family. My sister was eighteen months older than me, and my brother was six years younger. My sister was my best friend and primary playmate, and I loved my little brother unconditionally. I had a devoted father and a beautiful mother. We had two dogs, and sometimes three. We lived on a typical suburban tree-lined street in a brick rancher. On the surface, we went through the motions of a family well. There were family drives, which were a popular outing at the time. There were barbecues and family trips to the beach. We were a typical Jewish family, but within our walls lurked hidden secrets and manipulations; deception and adultery.

My life was a fraudulent one. When family life is built around the deception of adultery, it becomes hollow. I was a Jewish girl wandering through life seeking something I didn't consciously know. I carried a gnawing discomfort and edginess that belied the seemingly sweet, obedient little girl of an adulterous mother.

Sorrow was my shadow. It became like a blanket to me, surrounding me with comforting predictability like night follows day.

My mother was a Brooklyn, New York girl who was the youngest of nine children. She was surrounded by multiple parenting figures, as one would expect. She grew to be a strikingly beautiful woman. I used to describe her as Marilyn Monroe with black hair. Her dark brown eyes that sparkled with an easy smile were mesmerizing to men, and her body was blessed with the voluptuousness that was most valued by the culture at that time. She was a sweet woman. My mom loved to dance and sing with her lovely voice and always promised someday to take singing lessons. She also loved to draw and paint, with the promise of one day taking professional art classes.

Sadly, she never did any of those things. She didn't excel in her God-given talents but rather excelled at reveling in her beauty. Men adored her, as did my father. I'd marvel at the heads that turned in her direction as she walked into a roomful of people.

She was charming with a good sense of humor. I loved it when she'd teach me how to dance to Motown music. I loved gazing down into the living room and watching her dance with my father at the parties they liked to have in our home. Seeing them enjoying life together in those moments filled me with joy and pride.

I recall her reading to my sister and me at night in our bedroom. She had that promise of a nightly ritual, and I even remember her teaching us to pray at bedtime: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I should die before I wake, I pray to God my soul to take."

My siblings and I were very obedient children, so in many respects, we made her job as a mother easy. My mom was not a harsh disciplinarian nor overly strict with us as children.

She was fun-loving, and my friends always enjoyed coming to my home to visit. What was there to hate? The challenge for the child of such a mother is that it was impossible to hate her. I loved my mother and remained deeply devoted to her throughout my childhood and through the entirety of my adulthood.

My devotion was in part due to the role reversal required of me and my sister. The sense of obligation to protect and support my mother was seared into me like a tattoo. It was a cornerstone of my own identity as I matured. Even after her death in the hospital, I sat vigil, protecting her body until the funeral home arrived to take her away. The hospital staff wanted to bring her body down to the morgue but I wouldn't allow it. I knew she'd hate being alone like that. It was as if the role reversal she had demanded was hard-wired into my psyche.

It may have been easier if she was unloving, hateful, or overly strict and withholding. But she was none of these things. My mother's failings were always clandestine. She hid them from my father and the wives of her numerous lovers. A need for attention from men was an addiction for her. This addiction was so prevailing that she would come to use her daughters as her confidantes so that she could manage her secret life.

Within the walls of my home, my mother shattered the sanctity of

both family and marriage. She betrayed the blessings of motherhood and enlisted my sister and me as accomplices to a lifestyle that became like oxygen to her. Her secret life was her sustenance; her children and husband were not.

I think about how attached I was to my family growing up. Looking back, it seems the more elusive and emotionally impoverished my family was, the tighter I held on. The less my mother valued its preciousness, the more I tightened my grip on it, until family itself became an idol to me. My parents referred to me as the family girl. I used to refer to myself as the mortar that held the family together. That became my identity. It gave me a sense of importance in an environment that didn't offer me the value in the integrity and sanctity of family that I hungered for. The sweetness of cherishing each other was absent.

The anguish I would experience in the defiling of my family became the compass of my life. It permeated it. In order to find peace in the sorrow that vibrated just below the surface of my mind, I began a mental process that focused solely on my holding the family together. I began the systematic process of relinquishing my sense of self and my own identity in an effort to keep the family intact.

I celebrated family gatherings with enthusiasm. Having learned to never ask for anything, I deferred to whatever my mother wanted and was obedient to the nth degree. I denied my own urges and impulses until I became so self-controlled and self-reflective that by the time I entered my adolescence, I easily gave up the typical teenage outings and socializing that were the cultural hallmarks of those years.



Beginning at the age of four, I knew something was missing. I knew my life was a lie. Not like a mature adult who knows how to discern truth from lies. Rather, I knew it in an obtuse, gnawing, and unformed way in my gut. I was a child who could only sense and intuit but not yet understand with the wisdom that comes from life

experience. My life was that of an idyllic fantasy of family, and I was a little girl with childlike intellect, unable to reconcile this sham.

When I was four, my parents separated for the first time. I recall my mother crying and waking my sister and me out of deep sleep. It was dawn on a Sunday morning as she bundled us up into the back seat of our family car. Out of the second-floor window my father was leaning and shouting at her while she cried shouting back. That morning my idyllic life shattered with the rising of the sun.

We spent the next days or weeks at my cousin's house, while my parents, my grandparents, and extended family worked it out. They worked it out. We returned home to our make-believe life. From that moment on, I never trusted my home life as reality. I began the development of what I would refer to as my antenna. I was an obedient and vigilant child, always waiting for a sign of the collapse of my world as I knew it.

On the surface, all appeared well with the lovely wife and her handsome husband and their two beautiful little girls and adorable son. There was the house with a family dog and a backyard swing set. We did surface well. We continued to take family vacations and had family barbecues, birthday parties, and holiday celebrations. I excelled in school and piano lessons. But a beautiful house that was permeated by adultery and lies was still a house built on sand.

Tainted and spoiled by deception like a scorched pot of soup, my family life left me longing for the love and honor that it was designed for. I pondered if God planted this awareness within me so that I would hunger for something I couldn't define. At four years old, the longing for love and sweetness is an urge without clear intellectual concepts. It's a hunger that permeates everything throughout the day and wee hours of the night. It's like oxygen. Your life depends upon it. And while at such a young age, I couldn't have verbalized that it was missing, God knew, and He beckoned me.

It's not that my parents didn't love me. I actually felt deeply loved by my father. I adored him, and I knew he adored me. This deep-rooted connection felt very different from the one with my mother.