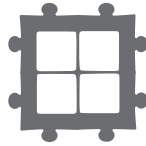


SASSY SONJA,

BEHIND THE CLOSED DOOR
OF MARITAL RAPE



By
Sarah Sewell Wolters



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DEDICATION

To My High School Band Director

Stephen Yanetovich

Who Taught Me Many Life Lessons



PREFACE

Does a wife have the right to control her own body? Reporting sexual abuse in the US today is still discouraged for the good of society. Religion supports the husband's right to intercourse, and it is a subjective, couple-by-couple determination of what rough sex is. In only twenty-two states do husbands have no exemption from rape prosecution. Married women in these states have protection equal to that of other victims. This information is from the May 2005 National Clearinghouse on Marital and Date Rape's State Law Chart. Unlike rape by a stranger, domestic violence by an intimate partner is ongoing, and the victim must struggle to maintain psychological balance. In 2013, free emergency shelters, transitional housing, and assistance in planning to build a healthy future are available to these victims. The state of Virginia has thirty-seven such shelters, according to a nationwide website: <http://womenshelters.org>.

Sonja Kent had no protection in 1957 when she was forced to endure frequent, prolonged, rough sex from her legal husband. Her pleas for moderation were ignored, and no one in her family or church wanted to hear her pain. She was only a day away from death, due to blood poisoning present in multiple boils in her vagina spreading throughout her body, when her husband finally allowed her to leave their house and seek the help of a physician. Sonja was obedient to her religious instruction and maintained her virginity until marriage. She had a Christian faith strong enough to sustain her during the trauma which followed, but, let her tell you in her own words. Please read on.



VIP LIST

*Sonja Kent Barker
(our Leading Lady)*

Walter Barker (Sonja's Husband)

Jerry Kent (her Father)

Faye Alexander Kent (her Mother)

Luke Kent (her Brother)

Vince Kent (her Brother)

Lester Kent (her Grandfather)

Mary Walton Kent (her Grandmother)

Ronnie Cantwell (Mary's Lover)

*Grace Bowen
(Mary's illegitimate child by Ronnie)*

Arthur Bowen (married Grace)

*Mabel Kent
(married Jerry's brother Porter)*

Vince Alexander (Faye's Father)

Violet King Alexander (Faye's Mother)



OTHER CHARACTERS

Piano teacher – Miss Bloom
Jacksonville Church -Pastor Walker and wife, Martha
Band Director – Mr. Porter
High school friend – Carol from Southern California
Friend – Sandy, nurse at hospital
Father-in-law – Nelson and June Barker
Bank Boss – Mr. Larsen



CHAPTER 1



August 1955

I really love this room. It is quiet in this little den—hot, but quiet. I need to think this morning. Suddenly my comfortable life is pretty much ruined. Last night my father announced that we are moving to Jacksonville. We have to move because his lumber business is going “bankrupt”. I’m still not quite sure what that means exactly, but I do know that the business he has poured his every waking minute into will not be operating anymore. He was in the navy in Jacksonville during WWII and wants to go back there where he still has friends who haven’t been part of the lumber business. Mom has applied for a job with the navy.

My father, Jerry Kent, doesn’t believe in explaining things to children. He believes in obedience, particularly from me, his only daughter. He hates it when I ask him to spell out anything; it’s like I am blaspheming or something if I ask a simple question.

Regardless, last night at dinner I asked, “What about me?” I had to know. “I need to finish school.”

Father knew all about my scholarship to Converse College. My piano teacher is an alumna of Converse College and had one nomination for entrance each year. The nomination was mine as soon as I finished the auditions and eligibility requirements.

“I have to live here, in Augusta, not down south in

Jacksonville,” I told him.

“Tough,” he told me curtly. “Deal with it. You are needed with us in Florida.”

While he will tolerate a question under extreme circumstances, like this one, there is absolutely no arguing with my father unless you want a whipping. Even if you take it that far, you’d be getting the whipping for nothing because he would never change his mind. I’m only sixteen, not old enough yet to be out on my own. I have no options. Shut up and move is my only choice.

It’s maddening and not fair. What did I do wrong? Nothing. I studied hard, worked harder. My piano teacher, Miss Bloom, says that I could be a professional musician someday, that I have real talent. But what good is talent without instruction? I need to go to college! I didn’t “bankrupt” father’s business; he or someone else did that. It is not fair that my piano will be sold to help pay Dad’s debts. When I called Aunt Mabel this afternoon she said that she would talk to father about all this but that I “shouldn’t get my hopes up”.

My life is down the drain, flushed all the way to Jacksonville. I wish that we still lived with Grandpa and Grandma Kent. I was just a little girl back then, but life was so much better. Dad was off fighting for our country in WWII. Nobody yelled or screamed at me or asked me to do anything other than be good and go to school. Father says that Grandpa Lester is “backward” because he can’t read. So what if he can’t read? Grandma Mary reads for him. He sure knows how to work, how to make those mules obey without a whip! Grandpa never went bankrupt either. I think my father might be the one who is backward.

The only two places I’ve ever lived have been at Grandpa’s house and here. Jacksonville is a big city. I don’t think I’ll like the big city. Will all the kids at my new school hate me, call me a “hick from the sticks,” and generally give me hell? Can

I still play the piano? Why do I have to try and figure all this out; my life was all figured out. Maybe I shouldn't be angry. Vince and Luke are going to need me, for sure, especially if Mom is working everyday, all day long. I do love my brothers very much.

Aunt Mabel would love to have me live with her while I finish school. We get along so well, Aunt Mabel and me, probably because she is not from the South. She's from Austria and talks with a funny accent, although she says we have the funny accents. Uncle Porter married her over there in Europe when he was fighting the war against the Germans. I love the story about how they met.

One day Uncle Porter's army unit rolled into Leoben, Austria. The war had only been over for a few days. Most of the Austrians were happy to see the Americans, but Uncle Porter said that some of them supported Hitler and hated the United States. "You had to be careful," he always said when he told this part of the story. "Never could be sure if an Austrian wanted to hug you or shoot you."

A buddy told Uncle Porter about this gorgeous Austrian girl who worked in a tiny little clothing store on the outskirts of town. While the duds were nothing special, the Austrian girl sure was, according his friend. So Uncle Porter went to the little store. Mabel was a stunner, that's for sure. I've seen pictures of her back then. She's still a looker; everyone says so. Maybe that's another reason we get along so well because I'm a looker too. Anyway, Uncle Porter says he fell in love with Aunt Mabel right then and there. Now, I'm not sure it ever happens like that, but it makes for a good story. What is for sure is that my uncle finagled it so that he could stay in the area after his unit pulled out because he was so smitten. He courted Aunt Mabel proper, treated her like a queen, and even went to her father's house to

ask for her hand in marriage. Mabel says she was smitten too, if for no reason other than that my uncle was so determined.

They were the happiest couple I ever knew, always playing with each other—teasing, cuddling, and laughing. My folks don't even seem to like each other half the time. Maybe they were like Porter and Mabel once; maybe they somehow forgot how much they love each other. I don't know, but I do know that when I get married, I want to be like Porter and Mabel, happy, in love, and right with the world.

A couple of years ago Uncle Porter was standing in the wrong place at the wrong time at a big construction site up in Columbia, South Carolina. A piece of steel fell right on him, killing him instantly. Aunt Mabel was torn up, completely heartbroken. For a few weeks she didn't talk to anybody, see anybody, or do anything else. I thought she might die from the grief. It was the saddest thing I've ever been through. I love Mabel so much and felt sad for her, but there was nothing I could do to help her. I felt powerless, a lot like I feel right now.

"Honey," calls Mother, "supper's on. Your brothers are out back somewhere. Please make sure Luke and Vince wash up before dinner."

"Yes ma'am."

Our little house has a really nice back yard; two peach trees, a walnut tree and an oak, and just about a million flowers. Go out the back gate and you are in a little brother's paradise, as I call it, open land all the way to the canal. Those boys love to play cowboys and Indians, build forts, and run around out there until last light.

Dad has never really connected with Luke. He was off fighting the war when he was born and the two of them definitely don't mesh. Whatever Luke does, it's never good enough. I don't get it and I think its plain mean. Luke has his hands full just being a

twelve-year-old kid without having to put up with a father who is constantly making him feel lower than a slug.

My father has opinions on just about everything—the way things should be according to him. Sometimes I think that he couldn't care less about how anyone else feels about anything, as if he were the only one in the world who mattered.

Little Vince worships his older brother, so, in a way, that sort of makes up for my father's nonsense. If he'd let him, Vince would follow Luke around everyday, all day, the way my dog Kraus follows me. I give him full credit; Luke has the patience of Job. Not many twelve-year-olds would put up with a bratty four-year-old brother tugging at them from sunup to sundown.

"Luke! Vince! Supper!" If I yell, sooner rather than later, my brothers come running. They know the penalty for not coming straight home when called, a smack on the backside with my father's leather belt.

Tonight we're having ham, a rare treat. I think my father is trying to make up for giving us the bad news last night. It won't work with me. I'm still steaming, but I know better than to mouth off at the dinner table. My father arrives right on time, and my brothers charge in a second later. Typical Thursday at our house, but I suppose our whole schedule changes after this week. Everything changes after this week.

"Bless this food that we are about to consume, let it nourish and strengthen our bodies, oh Lord. Amen." Father always says grace before supper and it's always the same short prayer too.

"I got the job for sure at the shipyard," Mom announces.

"Just like that? Howdya pull that off so fast?"

"It's only solid for six months and they need workers, especially bookkeepers."

"Dad," I say, interrupting.

"I'm not finished talking with your mom yet, Sonja. Mind

your manners.” Father returns his attention to my mother. “Same pay as they were talkin’ ’bout last week?”

“Ten dollars more a month.”

“What a blessing,” Dad says in a mocking tone.

A minute or so passes, without anyone saying a word. I know the drill. I will be told when I am allowed to talk.

“Go ahead, Sonja.”

“Did you speak with Aunt Mabel today?”

“I did. I called her on my lunch hour.”

“Did she ask you if . . .”

“You ain’t stayin’ here, Sonja. Mabel ain’t the issue. I know she would look after you proper. We need you with us, ain’t I made that plain enough? Your mother is goin’ to hafta work full time, maybe more. You need to look after your brothers.”

“I don’t need much lookin’ after Pa, and I can tend to Vince,” Luke offers, knowing that he is risking punishment for speaking out of turn.

The volcano is about to blow; I can see it in Dad’s eyes. I want to run, but having tried that before I know that will only make things worse.

“Why the hell should I have to listen to this nonsense in my own home?” Father yells, as he pounds his fist on the table. “I work like a damn slave to provide for this family and all I get in return is bitchin’ and moanin’! Can’t a man eat his supper in peace?”

One more word from any of us and we all know what will happen next; father will break out the strap. So the rest of the meal passes in a tense silence until my father finishes eating, gets up from the table, and walks out onto the front porch to have a smoke.

