



## CHAPTER 1

# FROZEN

Sara

I could hear it as I walked up the drive. Muffled shouting. Arguing. My dad's voice, low and booming. Mum's voice, high and panicked.

My heart rate doubled by the time I reached the door. Maybe I shouldn't go inside yet.

Every fight was worse than the last. Sometimes Dad threw things, or got in Mum's face and screamed at her. He bullied her. Twice she had bruises — said she walked into a door, but she was lying.

After a big fight, things would be great for a while. Dad would apologise. He'd take us all out

for dinner, buy Mum perfume, call her beautiful. Totally different person from that gross, angry bully. Mum would start to relax, then she'd say he'd changed, or he was trying to be better and he deserved a second chance.

The last three months or so — since Christmas — had been good. Calm. Everyone getting along. I had started to believe Dad was trying to be a better person. Mum seemed happy. And I was happy, too. I did love my dad, after all. I wanted things to be nice and normal.

Then the cracks started to show. Dad began making mean comments about what Mum was wearing, and checking her phone to see who she was texting. There were raised voices at night. I'd had a nervous stomach ache for the last few days because I knew a big fight was brewing.

But I still wasn't ready for it.

My feet felt frozen to the front doorstep. I reached for the door handle, but didn't turn it.