

CHAPTER ONE

What is Happening to Me?



I thought I was going crazy.

NIGHT IS APPROACHING. My trapped feeling intensifies. Why did I feel so free during the day ... yet at night, panic sets in?

I would no longer shower in the evening. My fear that an intruder would break in and I could not hear it happening haunted me.

When I showered, I was gripped by a creepy feeling of being watched. Repeatedly, I would pull the shower curtain aside to make sure no one was standing there. I kept visualizing the shower scene in the movie *Psycho*. When I finished, I would step out and then be afraid to open the bathroom door because someone could be standing right outside.

The idea that someone was going “to get me” grew stronger and felt real. It was as if I had lived this experience already.

The bedroom door was my barrier behind the bigger and stronger locks I had added to my apartment. Locks that I would check and recheck to make sure each locked properly. Noises and reverberations permeated the air. As I lay down, I'd listen for sounds of a possible intruder and think: *Maybe I need better locks on the door.*

Sleeping was difficult. My valium intake was increasing as my sleeping pills were. I was easily startled and looked to my “pill friends” for relief.

When sleep came, the darkness began to feel evil. Shadows were envisioned as arms outstretched, coming to get me in the night. Nightlights were added to my rooms so I could see with more clarity as darkness invaded my space.

I thought I was going crazy. My shortness of breath, tightened muscles in my legs and shoulders, and listening acutely for sounds all highlighted my bazaar behavior. Nothing made sense.

I’m a mature woman. I had such a good ... such a perfect childhood. How could this—whatever “this” is—be happening to me?