

# Sudden Silence: a tale of murder and consequences

## Prologue

*(Winter)*

At first, clinging to the steep stony slope, she had the strength to save herself. Or so it seemed. Her morning workouts on the machines, and the dozen running miles each week, had kept her toned and taut. All her life she'd always won, prevailed, overcome. Clearly, from the intensity in her eyes, the steady deep gasps for air, the shifting gripping of fingers and scraping of boots in search of purchase in the rock, and the face gone rigid with the determination that burned within, she meant to overcome this, too. Thought not about the thousand-foot drop beneath her feet. Did not accept, for even an instant, that her time had come to die.

But there was too much of her dangling free, and not enough crevice to cling to. Gravity pulled at her boots, snaked up her legs, weakened her arms, wrists, fingers. Abruptly she slipped, in hideous, scraping stages: three inches, six inches, twelve. Other options gone, and in a rare gesture of submission—for she was not one to admit a need for help—she reached a chafed hand upward.

And with a swift slide flew free.

Downward she hurtled away from the cliff. Arms hugging herself, legs spread, hair flaring. Her flight was silent til she hit an outcrop that sent her spinning. Up came a long piercing scream that did not fade even as she vanished into the trees—

Sudden silence.