

Shelley – Young Prisoner aged 17 – Her Story

(The following life story is true, and apart from being typed, is as written by the writer).

The anger for my crimes came afterwards. The crime took place at about quarter to ten on a Saturday night. I was arrested in the early hours of the Sunday morning. I was shut in a cell on my own for hours – there was no anger at this time, just a sort of numbness. I can't explain how I felt when I learned he was dead, shock is not a good enough word.

I was charged with murder and remanded to prison. I had a lot of time to think about what had happened, and that's when the anger started to appear. I had four co-accused and went through each of them in turn blaming them and hating them, especially the girl who had done the stabbing. I hated her so much and kept thinking why did she have to do it. I had terrible nightmares, which I still have now, and I would wake up shaking, it would put me in a bad mood for the rest of the day, as they were so frightening and vivid. So I would snap at my friends at the slightest thing. After six months I got bail to my parents home.

The four of us involved were girls and were all friends, the youngest being fourteen, the eldest seventeen and we were very close before this happened. Two of them were sisters and it caused a great rift between them. We all had a big row one day, everyone blamed the girl who had done the stabbing and we said she'd not only killed someone, but ruined our lives too.

It caused arguments between me and my mum, as she became even more protective of me than before. Then three months before my trial one of my co-accused was killed in a car accident. She was the best friend I've ever had, we were inseparable.

When I was told, everything just came flooding out, my crime, prison, her death. I smashed up my room. I hated everybody and just wanted to be left alone. I was mad with her for dying and leaving me. We had a favourite place in the woods and I used to go there and just stand screaming her name until my throat was raw.

Then the first day of the trial came. I was so scared, but that then turned to anger as witness after witness lied. The press didn't help calling us 'angel-faced killers'. We'd already been found guilty by them. The worst was when I had to give evidence, the prosecutor called me a liar and tried to mix me up and put words into my mouth but he didn't succeed as I hid nothing and just told the truth. I hated him. I felt like screaming at the whole courtroom. I did not kill anyone.

Then the jury went out. First of all, my two co-accused were acquitted. Another was found guilty. Then they found me guilty of murder, a 10 – 2 majority verdict. I tried to shout "NO" but the sound wouldn't come out and then my legs wouldn't support me and I fell heavily banging my head against the bars. I knew there was only one sentence the judge could give us. We were both under age so were detained at "her Majesties Pleasure", given a life sentence for something I didn't do! I felt like someone had told me I was dead, my whole world just stopped. It's something you can't explain, it's much worse than words.

***The writers name has been changed, she is now 17years old
and into her third year of her life sentence in Cornton Vale Prison.***