

happen to my children when I wasn't there to protect them. "Something" vaguely translated to accident. "Accident" became synonymous with car. Often I fantasized coming home to the police car parked in my driveway. When it actually happened, no one was more surprised than I.

The first day of spring 1977, when winter is officially over and we anticipate the warmth of summer, the flowers, the new grass and the renewal of life — was the day death entered my life and left its irreversible scars.

I drove down my quiet suburban street in mid-afternoon March 21. The street was ordinary, so calm and so quiet. School was out for March break.

My eldest child, Steven, 17, was away in Switzerland on a ski trip with a school group. My middle child, a 15-year-old girl, was enjoying a shopping day at the then new Eaton Centre and my youngest was at a movie.

I felt in complete control, my world safe, and my family well-organized. I was looking forward to a week of relaxed good times with the girls while Steven was enjoying his skiing holiday. As a bonus, he would not be driving for a week. My fear of a car accident was groundless but nonetheless real.

As I approached the house, mentally planning the evening, I saw a police car parked two doors away from my house and vaguely noticed the officers coming away from the neighbour's door. They did not return to their car but stood surveying the street and consulting a notebook.

I parked my car, reached for my parcels, locked the car door and proceeded to the side door of the house. The two officers began walking toward me. I stopped and waited.

They asked if I was Mrs. Smith. "Yes," I answered, never once wondering how they knew my name. They then asked if anyone was in the house or if I was alone. Still unsuspecting, I said my husband was home and that an electrician was working in my house.

They asked if the van in our driveway was the electrician's. When I said it was, they said there seemed to be a problem with the van licence and could they come inside.

I still don't know what made me ask them again what was wrong, but I did. Realizing I was getting upset, they decided to tell me the news right there they had been sent to deliver.

They asked if I had a son named Steven. "Oh, so that's it," I smiled. He must have gotten a speeding ticket. Relieved I said yes but he was away. It was then they said: "Your son has been killed."

"Well, that can't be true," I said. "He's out of the country and besides look, here is his car."

They remained calm and again repeated their message, all the while steering me to the door. As I unlocked the door and began to scream, my husband came running from the back of the house.

"Oh good," I remembered thinking. "He'll get mad and make them take back their words and go away."

That was not to be. We stood there staring at each other. Numbness replacing reality. All emotion draining away. No tears would come, no words could be spoken.

At one point, I remember such rage that I wanted to hurl a dish at those two officers who had destroyed my life. If I could make them leave somehow the news would not be true. But they stayed and tried to