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The Gift

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L. KAY ADAMS



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Dedication

To Mama and Dad for always being
there for me, no matter what.

Special thanks to Mama for pointing me to
Jesus. Thank you for your love and your prayers.
I'm so honored to be your daughter.

My heavenly Father: Thank you for redeeming me with
divine intervention. I am nothing without you. You created
this story and brought me through this incredible journey!

To my husband and our amazing family: Thank
you. I love each of you so very much.

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Chapter 1

A Diamond in the Rough

“Remember diamonds are created under pressure so hold on, it will be your time to shine soon.”

—Sope Agbelusi

It happened. He was gone! Mama stormed out of the house.

Rudy was six at the time of his disappearance. He was nowhere in sight.

He must have wandered off, Mama thought. Immediately she remembered, “The railroad tracks!” Fearing the worst, she started calling his name. “R. J.! Rudy Jay Barby! Where are you?”

The railroad tracks were right behind our house, and the closest neighbors were a quarter mile away. Worry filled her mind. He had wandered off before, but not like this.

It was a warm, rainy April day in 1970. Mama was short of nine months pregnant. We were living in a southern farming community in Mississippi.

Mama continued looking up and down the road for him, but there was no sight of him.

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“Where could he be?” she sang out loud. “What if ... What if he got on those tracks?”

Mama noticed her stomach was getting hard again, and it was tightening. *Oh no, could it be?* she thought. *Not now! I need to find R. J.*

The pains continued, and she briskly walked as she screamed out, “R. J.!” Mama repeated herself over and over. “I have to find R. J.” She spoke a few other choice words too.

Her frustration was growing. *I will never find him*, she thought. Her emotions were too much, and tears began to roll down her cheeks. Still, no sight of R. J. and Mama was in full panic mode.

Irene Coffey lived down the road. She and Mama were best friends. Maybe Irene had seen him. She had six children, and R. J. liked to go there. Mama was hoping he was there.

Finally, Mama reached Irene’s house, frantic and exhausted. The sounds of children laughing and playing filled the air as she got closer.

Mama cried out, “R. J. ... R. J.!”

Soon, he came running. “Mama, Mama!” he cried.

An overwhelming relief came over Mama as she sobbed. “I found you. Thank God!” She wanted to tear into him, but instead, she wrapped her arms around him. “Thank God you’re okay! Don’t ever do that again!”

She apologized to Irene and said her farewells, and then R. J. and Mama headed back home. Mama noticed she was still having contractions but figured exhaustion was causing them. Her focus was on R. J. He was safe with her now.

They made it back home, and Mama collapsed on the couch trying to relax while propping her feet up, silently hoping but not sure. She questioned herself, *Could I be in labor this time?* All she could think about was E. J., and he wasn’t home yet. That’s my dad, also known as Eugene. That’s why we call him E. J., and Rudy goes by R. J.

The tightening in her stomach was getting worse! She kept thinking to herself, *This baby is coming, whether I like it or not!*

And about that time, Daddy walked through the door.

He shouted, "I'm home, honey. I got rained out today!" He was a crop duster at the time.

"Oh! You're here!" Mama sighed with relief. "Thank goodness! I thought I was going to have this baby without you."

Dad responded with a little sarcasm, "Now why would you go and do a thing like that?"

Mama went on the defense. "E. J., I'm not feeling well. R. J. went missing this morning, and after chasing after him, I can't shake this nausea!"

Daddy was a skeptic. "Catherine, I hope you're in labor this time! We were there a few days ago."

Mama cried out. "I know, but my stomach is hurting!" She stood up, and a sharp pain took her to her knees. "Oh ... Oh my goodness!" she wailed at the top of her lungs.

Fear and anxiety filled her face as tears rolled down her cheeks. She was scared and confused. This was her first baby, and she wasn't what to expect. "Please, E. J., I think it's time, let's go!"

The hospital was thirty minutes away, so Dad grabbed the bags and helped R. J. in the car. "Your mama is having the baby! Hurry up! We've got to go, son."

Mama sat down in the car, and a gush of warm fluid came out. Everything was wet.

"Oh no, E. J. I think my water broke!"

"Oh! In the new car!" Dad cried out.

For a moment, he lost all train of thought. That was his baby—the canary yellow sportster. *What a mess this will be to clean up*, he thought. Dad quickly came back to reality as Mama's screams fill the car.

But Mama's pains persisted, and there was no time to clean up or change clothes. "Oh ... oh ... This baby is coming!" Her breathing was becoming deep and rapid.

"I'm so scared, E. J. I hope everything is okay."

With that, Dad put his foot on the gas, and away they went.

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As they desperately raced to the hospital, he honked the horn at every passerby. Dad realized time was running out.

I must get her to the hospital, he thought to himself. Then he glanced in his rearview mirror and saw a highway patrolman on his tail. It wasn't unusual for my dad to drive with his foot to the floor, but he had an excuse this time. We were riding on two wheels.

Dad said, "Close your eyes and keep your mouth shut!"

The officer turned his lights and sirens on, But Dad put his foot on the gas harder and shouted, "I'm not stopping now!"

"The baby is coming!" Noises continued to come from Mama in between breathing sounds.

Dad was approaching the next intersection when another officer took chase. "Hang on! Here we go!" It was lights and sirens all the way to the hospital. Mama was gasping for air, trying to breathe through each pain. Then another loud yell came out. "Oh ... Oh!" Mama screamed as we crossed the Mississippi River. "I feel something between my legs. Something is hanging out, E. J.!" Mama reached between her legs. "It's a foot! This baby is coming out ...Go faster!"

I was a footling, also known as a breech baby.

R. J. sat in the backseat shaking and confused. He repeatedly asked, "Daddy, is Mommy okay?"

"Mommy is okay. She is having a baby," Dad explained.

Nothing like having lights and sirens for an entrance into this world. We safely made it to the hospital all in one piece. Dad pulled Mama to the front door. Police officers rushed over to us. But as soon as they saw Mama, they realized a baby was coming.

Dad jumped out yelling, "My wife is having a baby!"

The officer shouted, "Sir! Sir! You could have killed someone."

Dad tried to explain, "I understand I was speeding, but can you help me with my wife first and get a wheelchair?"

Finally, with all the commotion, everyone realized that getting my mother inside that hospital was imperative. It wasn't worth taking Dad to jail or writing him a ticket.

The doctor came running to help.

Dad said, “She has a foot coming out, Doctor.”

The doctor started barking orders to the nurses as they pushed Mama through the hospital doors. “This baby is coming now, and it is breech! Get her to surgery!”

The excitement was gone in a moment’s notice. The mood had changed. Daddy sat somberly, wondering and worrying. The not knowing was written all over his face. *What’s going to happen to my wife and baby? Will they make it through surgery?*

In the seventies, having a breech baby or a C-section were both risky. Turns out, though, I was a miracle baby. The doctor came out shouting, “It’s a girl!”

It had been a long wait for my parents. See, they had been unable to conceive for several years. As a matter of fact, they told Mama she couldn’t have children because of her endometriosis. So, like many parents, they adopted. That’s how I got my brother, R. J., or maybe that’s how he got me. Either way, he became my big brother that day.

On April 17 at 8:30 p.m., I entered this crazy world barely weighing in at four pounds. Mama named me Jeraldine Barby. She never believed she was pregnant because she never felt me move. Daddy said I was the tiniest little thing he’d ever seen. My head fit in the palm of his hand, and my feet barely touched the bend of his elbow.

That was the beginning, though. God created one more precious little diamond. It’s been said that geologists are still baffled how diamonds form in the earth. It can take billions of years and lots of heat and pressure before they rush to the surface and are found.

There is only one difference. God is not baffled how he created each one of us. He uses time and trials (some call it pressure) to shape and mold us into that precious gems that we are today. And then when he’s ready, it will be your time to shine, so hold on.

Everyone is a diamond in the rough.