

*Gray Cascade*

*The Gift of Life*

Darlene Bieber Elsbree

# GRAY CASCADE

## The Gift of Life

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Although familiar names have been used, none of this story is true except scripture.

Every attempt has been made to properly source all quotes.

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# *Gray Family Tree*

*HUSBAND*

*Paternal Great Grandfather:*

*Peter Gray I*

*WIFE*

*Paternal Great Grandmother:*

*Lydia (Grace) Gray*

*HUSBAND*

*Paternal Grandfather:*

*Peter Gray II*

*WIFE*

*Paternal Grandmother:*

*Mazie (Meredith) Gray*

# *Gray Family Tree*

*HUSBAND*

*Father: Peter Gray III*

*WIFE*

*Mother: Katherine (Richards) Gray*

*Children:*

*Peter Gray IV*

*May Elizabeth (Gray) Broderick*

*HUSBAND: Chad Broderick*

*Christina Mary Gray*

*HUSBAND: Clint Douglas*

*August Lydia Gray*

*Kane Michael Gray*

*Adam Thomas Gray*

*Fannie Meredith Gray*

*Hazel Gray*

*Matthew Gray*

*Pearl Esther Gray*

# *Richards Family Tree*

## *HUSBAND*

*Father: William Richards*

## *WIFE*

*Mother: Betty Sue (Harding) Richards*

## *Children:*

*Dennis Richards*

*WIFE : Carol (Barns) Richards*

*Children: Dennis Richards Jr.*

*Rose-Marie (Richards) Kennedy*

*HUSBAND: Tommy Kennedy*

*Children: Dennis James Kennedy*

*Larkin Richards*

*WIFE: Sara Stevens*

*Children: Kyle Larkin Stevens*

*Katherine (Richards) Gray*

CHAPTER ONE

*Plácido Investigation*

*John 15:5-6*

*5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. NIV*

**I** MUST SAY, being a part of a large family comes with its own challenges. I come from a family that was blessed with the ability to weather just about any storm – big

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or small. I choose to believe it's because Christ was (and continues to be) the center of our lives.

Great-Grandfather Gray was a man who worked his life away in the mines of Stotesbury, West Virginia. Having died at the young age of fifty-four, from Black Lung Disease, was one of the reasons Grandpa Gray II chose to become a farmer. Grandpa saw how hard his father worked in the mines and decided then he did not want to be a coal miner.

Growing up next to The Cascade Dairy Farm provided him the know-how to run and operate the farm. When Grandma and Grandpa Gray inherited The Cascade Dairy Farm, their lives forever changed.



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How Mother was conceived was the reason why she and her family moved from San Diego, California to the East Coast. Grandmother Richards was hoping that her children would never find out about her deep dark secret.

One day, many years later, two people rang the intercom bell, looking for "Katherine Gray" (my mother). Their names were, "Donald and Sharon Placido." They were brother and sister. Life would never be the same from that moment.

Even though it was wrong, I chose to eavesdrop on their conversation between those two people and Mother and Father. I could not believe what I heard. They claimed

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that my mother was their biological sister. The fear that overcame my mother was enough to make me want to show the visitors to the curb. Mother, for some reason, allowed them to explain why they thought she was their sister.

They handed Mother and Father a manila envelope. They told Mother that they found the envelope while they were going through their mother's belongings after her demise. "Please do not open until after my death," was written on top of the envelope, they said. They told Mother that they were staying at the hotel down by the Marina and gave her the hotel number and their room number that they were staying in.

My mother said to them that she wanted

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to investigate their findings and that she would get back in touch with them the following day.

“Thank you, Katherine. We look forward to your phone call,” Donald said.

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All I could think of was the fact that their father and my grandmother had an affair. There was no way that Grandmother Richards would have cheated on Grandpa...NO WAY! I was filling up with anger. Such accusations can tarnish one's reputation. Grandmother did not deserve that. She loved Grandpa Richards with all her heart.

Mother and Father remained outside, discussing what and how they were going to

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handle this situation. I heard Mother say to Dad that Grandma Richards wanted her never to look back, and to let this go.

Mom Said, "How can I ever let this go now? My brother and sister are here. I haven't even told Larkin or Dennis (her older brothers). How are they going to handle this when I tell them what happened? What are we going to tell the kids?"

"Katherine, one thing...one step at a time. We will handle this in the way you choose to handle it and NO other way."

"I agree, Peter, but according to this information, their mother is leading them to believe that the reason why she and their father divorced was that he cheated on her...with, my mother. That is devastating!

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They do not even know the truth about their father (let alone their own mother). Their mother has left them with the idea that their father and my mother had an affair. That is so unfair. How dare she tarnish my mother's reputation! I refuse to let her get away with that!"

"What are you thinking about, Katherine? Keep in mind that it is not our job to avenge. Revenge is for God...not you...not for anyone. I understand your anger and hurt, and I will be right by your side, whatever you decide. I trust you will do the right thing and handle this with 'kid gloves.' Remember what the scripture in Romans said?"

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*Romans 12:17-19*

*17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. NIV*

"I know, Peter...I know. I am just so hurt that anyone would have the heart to behave in that manner. I love my mother more than words can say. I miss her so much; (Mother began to cry in Dad's arms).

And for anyone to TRY and tarnish her good name is something I will NOT tolerate. I do not want to hurt Donald and Sharon, but I cannot allow their mother to lead them, believing such a lie."

"Katherine? One thing at a time. How

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would you like to handle Donald and Sharon?"

"Peter, I am afraid of what we are embarking upon. But I do know that I cannot ignore this. God has allowed me to be placed in this position, and I cannot ignore it. I have no choice but to take care of this and to gain back my mother's good name. I know it's late, but I would like you to call Peter, Jr. He would be able to conduct a speedy investigation on Donald and Sharon Placido. I want information on their mother and her death. I also wish to have a DNA test done on the three of us before I will be convinced that they are, in fact, my brother and sister."

When Dad came walking into the house, he just looked at me with a loving smile on

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his face. I then went outside to see how Mother was doing.

She asked me how I felt about everything that I accidentally overheard.

"I apologize for eavesdropping on your conversation, Mother. I want you to know that I am so proud of how you are handling the situation. If there is anything at all that I could do to ease your stress level, please let me know."

Mother said, "Christina, for now, please do not ask me any questions. The mystery will be revealed soon. But before it is, I need to gather all my information in a way that will answer everyone's questions. Once this is out, and things begin to calm down, I want all of us to go about our lives as if we never



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even knew about it.”

“Mother, you are scaring me; are you going to be alright?”

“I will be, Honey. Everything is going to be okay, I promise. We need to remember that Christ has a plan for us all, and we need to trust Him.”

“I do trust Him, Mom. I am here for you. I love you.”

“I love you too, Honey.”

I went to my room and sat at my window seat, just looking out at the moon shining down onto the pasture, my thoughts running amuck.

I began thinking about the life I once knew and how everything was about to change. I started journaling the turn of

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events in the lives of the Gray Family.

In the meantime, Dad phoned Peter.

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"Hello, Peter?"

"Hey, Dad, what's up?"

"Peter, I know it's late, Son, but your mother and I need you to come over right away."

"What's the matter, Dad?"

"Peter, I cannot go over it with you on the phone. Somethings come up, and your mother and I need you to do some major investigating right away."

"I'll be right over, Dad."

"Thanks, Son."

I noticed Peter getting out of his car. I could not begin to imagine the conversation

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he, Mom, and Dad were about to have.

August starts knocking on my door, asking to come in.

“Come in, August.”

“Christina, do you have any idea what is going on?”

“The only thing I can tell you is that those two people that came by are claiming that Mom is their sister.”

“WHAT?! How can that be? That means...well...they are accusing Grandma Richards of having an affair with their father!”

“I know...I do not believe that for one minute, August!”

“I don’t either. I do not like the fact that such implications can harm a person’s

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reputation, especially grandmothers. That is just not right. That must be so upsetting to Mom.”

“Surprisingly, August...Mom is a ‘rock.’ She is completely calm about this whole thing. One thing’s for sure; she refuses to allow anyone to tarnish her mother’s good name. I am so proud of her.”

“Me too, Christina.”

Meanwhile, Mom, Dad, and Peter are downstairs, devising a plan.

“Mom, Dad...what’s this all about?” Peter asked.

“Have a seat, son,” Dad said.

Mother had begun to explain. “Peter, two people, came by today, claiming that I was their sister. Their names are Donald and

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Sharon Placido from San Diego, California. They gave me this envelope full of reasons why their mother believes me to be their sister."

"Mom? What is going on?"

"Donald and Sharon Placido were going through their mother's belongings after she passed away. They came across this envelope with, 'not to be opened until after my death' written on it. According to this information, their mother is implying that the reason why she and their father, Donald Placido, Sr., divorced, is that he had an affair with my mother... (your grandmother). However, I know for a fact that Mother did not have a relation with that man. It was she that had an affair, and why they divorced."

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“Mom, how can you be so sure? Do you have proof of that?”

Peter, if I could shield you children from ever knowing the truth, I would. The truth is about to be discovered...therefore, I am going to be the one to shed light on Mother’s deep dark secret. It will be told in a respectful manner and in a way that will HONOR my mother...NOT destroy her reputation. I will not allow those two people or anyone to tarnish my mother’s good name.”

“Mom, Dad...what in the world is going on?”

“Peter, your grandmother...”

“What, Mother?”

“...Your grandmother was brutally

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attacked. Father (your grandfather) was in Chicago attending a medical convention at the time a stranger entered their home and held your grandmother hostage, raping her repeatedly. Your grandmother and grandfather kept loaded pistols in each of their nightstands. There came a moment when your grandmother was able to reach for her gun. She aimed the gun at his chest (as he was trying to get back to her to grab the gun), and she shot him. Your grandmother, being the doctor that she was and taking an oath to save lives, tried to save his... but she killed him in self-defense. When your grandmother died, she left me this box; her secret box."

"Is that the secret box she was looking for

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when the tornado struck down her house?"

"Yes, Peter."

"Oh, Mother, I am so sorry you have to go through this. So, what does this have to do with you being their sister? Oh, no...that was the night you were conceived! You are a product of rape. WOW! Mom, you were created out of violence yet look at the 'gift of life' given you by God. Knowing that does not make this any easier, but you are a God-fearing woman and have raised all your children (all ten of them) in Christ. You are indeed an amazing woman, and I am so proud to call you, Mother. I am so proud of Grandma Richards. She could have ended the pregnancy, but she chose to bring you into this world; another amazing woman."



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“Thank you, Peter. Not only that, my father gave me his name, ‘Richards.’ He loved me as if I were his own. What a wonderful man.”

“Yes, he was, Mom.”

Dad said, “so Peter, if you can look into this for us and get back to us as soon as possible, that would be great. They are actually expecting a call from your mother tomorrow sometime. I hope you will be able to give us some confirmation.”

“I should have no problem getting most of the information confirmed...or not. It is three hours earlier in California. When it comes to getting DNA testing, well...that may take a few weeks. It will require blood samples from the three of you. The three of

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you could go to the hospital tomorrow and have your blood drawn. You do not have to go at the same time they do, Mother. If you do not want to see them until this is confirmed, then don't. You have the right to choose how you wish to handle this. Do not allow them or anyone to intimidate you in any way."

"I know, Honey. I am okay. Whatever is going to make this situation... (I was going to say) go away, but I know it will never go away."

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The following day arrived. Nanny Sara had arrived a little earlier than usual. Her due date was closing in fast. She will be taking maternity leave...up to six weeks.

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“Nanny Sara was looking quite pregnant,” I thought.

It was the time that August and I left the house to go to work. Mother, Father, and Peter decided to meet Donald and Sharon Placido at the hospital to have their blood drawn for DNA testing.

Mother said that they were willing to have their blood drawn without any hesitation. They were polite and were glad to have Peter representing Mom. “If what they were claiming was true, they should not have any qualms at all,” I thought.

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The results were in. Donald and Sharon had to fly back to San Diego a few weeks ago. They needed to get back to work and take

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care of their families.

Peter, Jr. had the results in a sealed envelope. Mom and Dad met Peter at his office for privacy.

“Hey, Mom and Dad; come on in.”

“Hi, Honey. It’s a big day today, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is, Mom. I have the results, but I haven’t opened them. I wanted to wait until you and Dad arrived. Are you doing alright?”

“As well as could be expected, Hon.”

Dad held Mother’s hand tightly.

“Are you ready for the reveal of your DNA? Are you ready to know if you have another brother and a sister?”

“Let’s do this,” said Mom.

Peter opened the envelope, pulled out all three DNA results. Donald and Sharon’s

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DNA results showed that they were, in fact, one hundred percent siblings.

“I have your results right here, Mom.”

“What does it say?”

“It looks like you are, in fact, fifty percent their sibling.”

Mom and Dad looked at each other. Mother began to shed some tears. Not because this was news to her. She already knew she had half-siblings in California because her mother gave her every ounce of information that she and her father could find regarding the man who raped her. That information included his two children.

Mother became emotional. It confirmed that her mother was brutally raped and that she was a product of that rape.

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“Mom? You okay?”

“I will be, Peter.”

CHAPTER TWO

*Purifying Her Name*

*1 Peter 1:21-22*

*21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. 22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. NIV*

**F**ATHER ASKED MOTHER how she wanted to notify Donald and Sharon of their DNA results.

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“Peter, I want you and me to fly out to San Diego and deliver the news in person. I want to get ahold of May and Chad to see how soon we can reserve a flight with the airline that Chad works for. I think he could get us a good rate,” Mother said.

“Would you like me to call May and ask them over for dinner tonight?”

“Yes, that would be a good idea, but first, I need to see if Nanny Sara can watch the kids a little longer tonight. August and Christina should be home from work in time to have dinner with us. They already know something is up.

I plan to see if Larkin and Dennis are free to meet with me this afternoon. I need to tell them what is going on before having the



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family meeting I never wanted to have.”

“Mother, are you going to be okay?”

“Yes, Honey. Sometimes life throws you an unwanted curveball. This just provides me...all of us another opportunity to show our faith, no matter how difficult it can be at times...

*James 1:12*

*12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.  
NIV*

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“Hello, Larkin? This is Katherine. I am calling to see if you can leave the barn a little early today and if it would be okay for me to come over and visit with you around two

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o'clock? Dennis is taking the afternoon off, so he said that he would be able to meet with you and me at that time."

"Sure, Katherine. What's up?

"If you don't mind, Larkin, can you wait until we meet later today before going into it?"

"Of course. I must say, you sure have my curiosity brewing. I will see you there at two o'clock."

"Thanks, Larkin. See you then."

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"Knock, knock, knock..."

"Hey Katherine, C'mon in," Larkin said.

"Thanks."

"Dennis is already here. Can I get you something to drink?"

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"Sure, thanks."

"I have soda, water, and some ice-tea."

"That sounds great; I will take some ice-tea."

"I will get you some. Dennis is in the family room if you want to join him there."

"Sounds good," Mom said.

"Hey little sister...what's the mystery all about?" said Dennis.

Larkin comes walking into the family room with ice-tea.

"Yeah, little sister...what is the mystery all about?"

"I don't even know how to tell you guys this. Mom left it up to me to tell you."

"Katherine, what the heck is going on? Just say it," Dennis said.

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“I am holding in my hand a letter from Mom to me. When the tornado struck down Mom’s house, and I was helping her search for her locked box, well, that was when I discovered she was holding onto a secret. That secret would forever change all our lives. She said that one day, the secret would be revealed; a time will come when it will be the ‘right time.’ She asked me not to ask her about it, and to let it go for now. Before she passed away, this letter was given to me.”

“What does it say, Katherine?” Larkin asked.

“Do you remember back when you two were around eleven or twelve years old you had attended church camp...and your time there was extended?”

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“Yes...” Dennis and Larkin replied.

“Well, Dad was at a medical convention in Chicago.”

“Yes, we remember that,” Dennis said.

“What is it, Katherine?” Larkin said.

“This is the reason why we moved from San Diego, California, over to the East Coast... A strange man broke into our house there while Mom was out grocery shopping. When she returned, he was there waiting for her. He came up from behind her and attacked her severely. He held her hostage and raped her repeatedly that night.

“What the heck are you saying, Katherine?” Larkin asked.

“I’m not done yet. Mom and Dad always kept loaded pistols in their nightstands.

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There came a brief moment when Mom was able to grab her gun. He was heading toward Mom to try and take the gun away from her, but Mom aimed it at his chest and shot him. He fell to the floor. Mom tried to save his ...but he died."

"Katherine, this sounds like something out of a horror movie!" Dennis said.

"I know, Dennis. I'm not done yet."

"Oh, Dear God," Dennis replied.

"That was the night I was conceived. Dennis and Larkin, your father, and our mother chose to bring me into this world with a loving heart. Your father graciously gave me his name and loved me as though I was his own."

Mother began to cry.

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“Oh, Katherine. Mother never led on to any of this. What amazing parents we have,” Larkin said.

“One more thing...the man who raped Mother was going through a divorce because his wife had cheated on him at the same time, he was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer.”

“This is unbelievable, Katherine. That does not excuse what he did!” Larkin said.

“I know, Larkin. He had two children; Donald and Sharon Placido. They have contacted me. They flew all the way from California because of the information left to them by their mother, who had recently passed away. They found an envelope while they were going through her belongings.

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However, she is making it sound like their father and our mother had an affair. They do not even know the truth about their father and how he actually died. They just think he died from cancer.

Anyway, Peter Jr. did a thorough investigation, and the three of us had our DNA tested a few weeks ago at our local hospital. The results came in yesterday. Peter and I went to Jr.'s office this morning, and it was confirmed. Donald and Sharon are one hundred percent siblings, and I am fifty percent their sibling."

"Oh my gosh!" Dennis replied.

"I needed to tell you before telling the older kids. Christina and August already know that something is going on. They were



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there when the two of them rang the intercom bell.

We are having Chad and May over tonight for dinner. Peter and I are planning on flying out there to meet with Donald and Sharon to share with them their DNA results. I also plan on informing them 'the TRUTH about their mother and the way their father died and why he died that way. I do not intend to be vengeful about the way I deliver the news to them; I just refuse to allow anyone to tarnish my mother's good name! It isn't gonna happen!"

"We are proud of you, Katherine...proud of how you are handling this. And, I know I can speak for Larkin here, too...even though your DNA showed that we are half-siblings,

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you will ALWAYS be our sister one hundred percent!"

Larkin chimed in immediately, "we don't care what your DNA revealed. You will forever be the sister we have always known. You got that?!"

"I love you guys. Thank you so much. I needed to hear that."

"When are you flying out to California?" Larkin asked.

"That's one of the things we are going to talk with Chad about tonight at dinner. We want to fly out there on his plane."

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May and Chad arrived. They brought over a huge garden salad filled with tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, lettuce, and

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peppers...from their very own garden. It looked so delicious. Peter arrived only a few minutes later.

It was time for dinner, and everyone was sitting around the table. Mother fixed baked salmon with baked potatoes and dinner rolls. She also made a fruit platter for dessert.

Once dinner was over, Nanny Sara took the younger kids into the other room so they could not overhear the conversation that was about to take place at the dinner table. Father put on a pot of coffee.

August and I just looked at each other...knowing that the conversation about to take place was going to be life changing. My heart began to pound. I was sort of

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wishing that Clint was here just to lend me some moral support.

May and Chad looked at each other and then at August and me. May asked Peter if he knew what this meeting was all about. He said that he did, but she needed to hear it from Mom.

“Oh, dear,” May said.

Dad said, “I know you all are wondering why we asked you to be here tonight.”

“Dad, what is this all about? Is everything alright?” May asked.

Mom chimed in and began the meeting. “I was hoping that I would never have to have this meeting with you children. I was hoping to shield you from what I am about to tell you.”

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“Mom, what is it? Are you okay? You are not sick, are you?” May asked.

“No, Honey. It’s nothing like that...”

Mom was having such a hard time telling us kids what was going on. But then she gained enough courage and was able to enlighten us kids of Grandma Richards’s secret and how she was conceived.

“Do you remember that devastating tornado that struck down your Grandma Richards house?”

“Yes, Mom,” said May.

“Yeah, we remember that,” August said.

“Well... remember that box Grandma Richards was looking for, and it was nowhere to be found?”

Everyone (but Chad) was shaking their

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heads, "Yes."

"That box held your grandmother's deep dark secret. Grandmother had written this letter to me (as she holds the letter up for everyone to see) before she passed away, which explained everything that was inside this box (as she showed the box to everyone). Grandma and Grandpa Richards made the decision to leave San Diego, California, to leave behind the memories that consumed them and feared that your uncles Larkin and Dennis would one day discover."

"What is it, Mom?" I asked.

"Your Grandpa was at a medical convention in Chicago at the same time your uncles, Larkin and Dennis were at church

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camp. Your grandmother had come home from grocery shopping. A stranger broke into the house, came up from behind her and attacked her, beating her and raping her repeatedly.”

“Oh, Mom... that is devastating!” May said.

August and I both began sobbing.

“Your grandma and grandpa kept loaded pistols in their nightstands. There came a moment when Grandma Richards was able to reach for her gun. She aimed it toward the man’s chest as he was trying to reach for it himself. It was at that moment your grandmother shot him in the chest. She attempted to save his life, and to no avail, he died. She killed him in self-defense, and that

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was the night I was conceived. I am a product of rape and violence.”

Dad was holding my mother’s hand.

“Not for one minute did your grandmother and grandfather Richards think to end the pregnancy. They chose to bring me into this world. Your grandfather lovingly gave me his name and raised me as his own.”

“So, that is why Grandma Richards wanted all us girls to specialize in Martial Arts... so that we can defend ourselves,” I said.

Mother said, “Yes.”

“So, who were those two people that stopped by a few weeks ago?” August asked.

“Their names are Sharon and Donald



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Placido. They are my half brother and sister. Their father was the man who attacked Grandma Richards. They do not know the truth about their father's demise.

When their mother passed away, she left them an envelope with information on why she and their father divorced. Sharon and Donald were led to believe that their father had an affair with your grandmother, when in fact, she was the one who had relations with another man; at the same time, Donald Sr. was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer.

That does not, by any means, make what he did to your grandmother, okay!! I will not allow their mother to tarnish my mother's good name."

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“Mother, what do you plan to do?” May asked.

“Well, this is what I wanted to ask Chad about...”

“What is it, Mother Gray?” Chad asked.

“When Sharon and Donald Placido were here, your father, Peter, and I met them at the hospital to have our DNA tested. It proved that I was, in fact, fifty percent their sister. I was hoping to fly to San Diego to meet with them and share with them their DNA results. I plan to gain my mother’s good name back by telling them that their mother was the one who had an affair at the same time their father was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer, along with raping my mother. I plan to tell them that my mother

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shot and killed their father in self-defense. I plan to give them complete copies of the police records. I do not want to hurt them in any way. I just cannot allow anyone to tarnish my mother's good name."

Chad said to Mother and Father, "I will be flying out West in two days. Would you be able to fly out that day?"

"That would be perfect, Chad," Dad said.

"Tomorrow, when I go into work, I will personally see to it that your flight information is booked and confirmed. Departure time will be six o'clock in the morning."

"We will be ready. Thank you, Chad," said Mother.