

A Look Inside “Born To Rain”

BORN TO RAIN

CHAPTER I

COMING OF AGE

It was a hot July summer day in Georgia and I was sitting on my grandma’s old wooden porch enjoying the summer breeze. I saw a cloud of dust coming down the long dirt road. I didn’t know who was coming to visit until they actually stopped in front of the house and the dust cleared the air. “Hello Mr. Fletcher, how are you doing today?” “Well hello Rain, is ya grandma home?” “No sir, she went to town to fetch some groceries.” “Well, how bout I just sit a while with you?” As he came closer my heart began to race. He sat so close to me I could smell the dreadful odor of the cherry tobacco in his pipe. I slowly slid away from him to allow the summer breeze to pass between us. I pulled my dress down to my ankles and held it in place. “You know, I sure could use a nice glass of tea.” “Yes sir, I’ll fetch you a glass.” I was happy to go in the house and get away from him. The sheer presence of that yellow man did something to my soul. As I got the glass from the cupboard I heard the screen door squeak. I slowly pour a full glass of tea and pretended I didn’t hear the door. As I turned around he was there. “Ah, Mr. Fletch, you gave me a fright.” “Why would you be afraid of me?” “Well sir, I just didn’t expect for you to be standing there is all.” I quickly gave him the glass of tea and headed back to the porch. [smash] “Rain, come child I dropped the glass and broke it.” I ran into the house to find Mr. Fletcher just standing there in the middle of this mess on the floor. How could a grown man be so clumsy? My grandma is gonna have a fit when she sees one of her good glasses gone. I grabbed the broom and the mop out the cupboard and began to clean the mess. “Ouch!” I cut my finger as I picked up the big pieces of glass. “Be careful, let me see.” Blood started to run down my finger. “I need to wash it off and put some ointment on it.” “Don’t worry it ain’t all that bad. Let me show you.” Slowly Mr. Fletcher started to suck my finger. “Na, don’t that feel better?” “ye.... yeyes sir.” When I tried to pull my finger from his mouth he grabbed my hand and wouldn’t let go. His large mouth covered my entire finger and he just kept sucking it. I held my head down as he seem to take pleasure in this act. I kept thinking I’ve got to get this mess cleaned up before my grandma comes back home. “Thank you sir, I need to clean this mess before my grandma returns.” I slowly removed my finger from his mouth and

went to get a bandage to wrap my finger. When I returned to the kitchen Mr. Fletcher was standing there leaning on the counter looking at me as if he could see clear through me. He watched as I cleaned up the rest of the glass and mopped up the tea. I really didn't like his kind. I heard people talking about how he was shacking up with some young girl right after his wife died. "Rain, you certainly do a good job of cleaning." "Thank you sir." "How about you come over to my place sometime and tidy things up?" "Well sir, school will be starting soon and I have chores I have to do around here on the weekend." "I can pay you a good salary. How old you now?" "I'll be thirteen come August." "Well, you think about it now and let me know."

I heard the squeak of the screen door. "Hey Ruby Pearl." "Hey Fletcher, what you doing on this side of town?" "I came to bring you a bushel of apple from my tree. You know don't nobody make a fresh apple pie like you." "Hum, that young thang you got over there living with ya can't make no pie? Fletcher, when are you going to stop fooling round with them young girls and get you a woman yo own age? Rain, put these groceries away and stop listening to grown folk talk. Let me see these apples you got Fletcher." I was glad when they left. The kitchen is too small for all of us to be in there at the same time. I heard Mr. Fletcher's car starting as my grandma returned in the house. "Eww Lord it is hot out there. Rain bring me a big glass of tea with lots of ice." "Yes ma'am." "Did you put away those groceries like I told you?" "Yes ma'am." "You been in this house all summer long. Why don't you go play with some of the other li'l girls?" "They don't like me." "What you mean they don't like you?" You use to play with Mrs. Sally's granddaughter and there's lots of li'l girls that's always at that house. You know it's not good to be in this house all day." "Yes ma'am but Rose and I use to be friends and then all the other girls started teasing me and she had nothing to say." "What you mean teasing you? About what?" They say I'm mixed and I don't know who my daddy is. Then they always sing that song, rain, rain go away come back another day." "They just mad cause you is a pretty li'l girl. Don't you mind them none." "But grandma what about my daddy? I don't know who he is. I know my momma died giving birth to me but you never told me anything about my daddy." "Well child there is nothing to say bout him. I don't much bout him anyway. Besides all you need to know is yo momma loved so much that she made sure she saw you and named you before she slipped away from us. Now go on outside and play. The summer will be over and it will be time for school before ya know it." "Yes ma'am." "Dear God forgive me."

I went outside and walked to Rose house. When I got there the girls were jumping rope. "Hey Rose." "Hey Rain, come on in." "She can't play with us."

“Yeah, she think she is so cute.” “I didn’t come down here for trouble.” “Well trouble is all you gone find all yo life.” One girl started pulling my hair and another pushed me from behind. Before I knew it the three of us were on the ground fighting in the dirt. “Hey, hey, stop that now. What’s wrong with yall? It ain’t right for girls to be fighting all in the dirt. Now look at ya all dirty and filthy. Rose why didn’t you stop this mess?” “I couldn’t get them apart grandma.” “You tellin a lie! You didn’t even try to help me.” “Now Rain I think you need to go on home. You girls need to go home too.” I was so mad I kicked dirt all the way home. As I got to the front porch I looked at my clothes and new my grandma was going to have a fit at how dirty I was. I dusted myself off and went into the house. “Child what on earth have you been doing?” “I got into a fight with them girls at Rose house.” “A fight? Where was Mrs. Sally?” “She was in the house until she heard all the commotion and she came out to break us apart. Grandma I told you these girls don’t like me and I don’t know why. I feel like I’m cursed because of my color.” “Aw baby come here.” I sobbed in my grandma’s chest as she held me. “There is nothing wrong with the color of your skin. God made you and created you in his image. He made you perfectly beautiful.” My grandma always seem to have to right words to say to make feel better. “Now go get washed up and get ready for supper.”

As I got undressed to take my bath I stood there and looked in the mirror. I wondered why God made me different from my momma and my grandma. Neither of them was as light as me. Even with all this dirt on me I was still light. I was yellow under all that dirt. I must have gotten my color from my daddy. Hum, my daddy. “Rain, Rain, Rain.” Why would somebody name they child Rain? Maybe I was born on a rainy day. Maybe it was a bad storm coming through.

“Now you look a whole lot better. Come sit at the table. Dinner is ready.” I loved my grandma’s cooking. It seem like she could take nothing and make a meal to feed a village. “I want you to eat all your food and get ready for bed. We got to be to church early in the morning.” “Yes ma’am.” Grandma went into the living room to watch her favorite show. She always seemed to eat late and only ate pieces of a meal. After I finished my dinner I cleaned up the dishes and joined my grandma on the couch. We were like two li’l old ladies sitting there all snuggled up. “Okay, time for you to go to bed li’l girl. I want you to pick out your church clothes for in the morning.” “Yes ma’am. Good night grandma.”

I woke up early to the smell of bacon cooking. "Rain, Rain, you up?" "Yes ma'am." "Come get ya breakfast while it's hot. We don't wanna be late for church." I made my way to the kitchen and found my plate on the table. I don't know who my grandma thought she was cooking for. There was bacon, eggs, toast, grits, biscuits, and fresh fruit. "Grandma I don't know why you always fixing all this food." "Shush, if you talking you can't be eatin. Now hurry up and finish so we can get to church." I went to my room to get dressed. I picked out a pretty flowered dress. I put on my white socks and rolled them down to my ankles and my white patten leather shoes to top it off. "I'm ready." "Don't you look like a pretty garden with all those beautiful flowers." As we headed out the door my grandma stopped at the mirror for that last look before walking out the door. We walked down the dirt rode hand in hand singing hymns. As we got closer we could hear the music coming from the church. Service had just started. "Morning Ruby, morning Rain." "Good morning sister Fields." The music started to move my soul. I loved going to church. We sat in the second row of pews every Sunday like it was our assigned seats. I don't care how many people were in church we always managed to sit in the same spot. "I've got a feeling everything's gonna be alright, Oh, oh I've got a feeling everything's gonna be alright, be alright, be alright." "Amen, hallelujah!" my grandma shouted.

"Good morning church. God is good all the time. I'm glad you all could make it to the house of God one more time. I'm going to preach from Psalms chapter 138, the 8th verse. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me your steadfast love, O Lord endures forever." I listened intently as the pastor spoke. I wondered what was his purpose for my life. As the service ended we made our way to the dining area of the church where they serve drinks and snacks after service. My grandma went to talk to some of the ladies of the church when I saw Rose and her grandmother. Just as I was getting ready to make my way to them I heard whispering voices behind me. "Rain, rain go away come back another day. I guess all those flowers on that dress could use some rain....hahaha" "Excuse me grandma are you ready to head home now?" "I'll see you ladies next Sunday. Come on Rain I'm ready. I got to get home anyway and start supper." When we got home I changed my clothes and joined my grandma in the kitchen. It was already hot and the stove seemed to make it even hotter. "Here, cut this cabbage and peel those potatoes for me please." "What are we having for dinner today?" "Meatloaf, fried cabbage, mashed potatoes and cornbread." "Grandma, these girls are always teasing me and making fun of me. I wish I had one friend that liked me." "Honey don't worry about them girls. One day you'll find a friend that will like you for who you are."

After we ate dinner I curled up with my grandma on the couch. I would lay my head on her lap as she stroked my head while humming a song. "Grandma, tell me about my momma." "Girl, how many times you want me to tell you that story? Aren't you tired of the same ol' story?" "No ma'am. "Well, yo mama was just as pretty as she could be. She was talk and skinny. She was teased a lot too because they said she looked like a tree. I told her the same thing I've been telling you. Don't worry about them girls and one day you'll find a real friend. She was a smart girl. Made A's in all her classes. She liked to read all the time too. I couldn't get her to do her chores because she always had her face in a book. She never gave me a lick of trouble." "But, but I don't understand why she got pregnant with me at such a young age if she was so smart." "Mind yo mouth now! Just because she got pregnant at an early age don't mean she wasn't smart." "What about my daddy? Did she love him and did he love her?" "Rain, there are just some things you won't understand at yo age and this is one of them." "Were you there when I was born? Did my daddy come see me?" "Yes I was there when you were born. You were born right here in this house just like ya momma. You were such a pretty baby with a head full of curly hair." "And my daddy? Was my daddy here?" "No he wasn't. He was long gone before you were born. Get up now, it's time for you to go to bed." "Good night." "Good night baby. Don't forget to say yo prayers too." "Yes ma'am."

"Grandma, you didn't sleep in your bed?" "I guess not. I must of fell asleep out here on the couch. Let me get up take a bath and fix yo breakfast. We gotta go in town to do some school shopping for you." I love my grandma but I wish my momma was here to take me shopping. I know we would have a lot of fun. As I look at my mother's pictures I wonder why God took her away from me. I wish I could talk to her and let her tell me about my daddy. Everybody acts as though he never existed. I wonder where he went and did he even know my momma was with child. Even if he didn't know about me, why didn't he ever come back? "Rain, come eat so we can go." "Yes ma'am."

I hate walking on this long dirt road. I wish we could get it paved. Some days I feel like why take a bath when I'm going to get all dirty again just to get to the city road. "This bus is late today." "One day I'm gonna have my own car and I can take you into town and anywhere else you need to go. There won't be no need for you to take the city bus." "Well, you just worry bout yo grades and making ya marks. That will make me happy more than anything. Oh, thank the Lord, here comes the bus." As my grandma and I rode the bus I just looked out the window as we passed fields after fields. I wish we lived in town

or a little closer to town but my grandma always says that her land has been in her family for generations and she wouldn't give it up for the world. My grandma pulls the string to let the driver know we wanted to get off at the next stop. "Y'all have a good day ladies" said the driver as we got off. I loved going into town. The streets were lined with all sorts of shops on both sides. Going to town was like going on adventure. There were signs of all colors, trees lined the streets and people moving about. A big difference from my grandma's house where everything seemed brown and dry, burnt by the sun's rays.

"Good morning ladies" said the lady in the second hand store. "May I help you with anything?" "We're looking for some school clothes for my granddaughter." "We just got in some new items on the rack near the back. I'm sure you can find something back there for your liking." I hated to shop in second hand clothing stores. But I knew it was all my grandma could afford. I really wanted to shop in some of those fancy stores that had the manikins in the windows instead of this little store front shop with used clothes. "Come on Rain, let's see what we can find." As we made our way to the back of the store I saw one of my classmates back there with her mother. Who would have thought Rebecca would be shopping in the second hand store. She is the biggest bully at school, always teasing the other girls about their clothes, shoes and hair. "Hello Rebecca, I'm surprised to see you here." "Hey Rain, I'm just in here with my momma. She likes to come in here to look around." "Rebecca, I think I found you a pretty dress. How do you like this one?" said her mother. "Um, yes ma'am that's fine." Rebecca turned around at me and pointed her finger in my chest. "If I ever hear about you telling people I was shopping here I will beat you into the ground. You understand me?" "Sure.....sure Rebecca, I won't tell a soul." "Rain, come help me look through these clothes." As I tried to make it pass Rebecca she stood in my way before saying, "Remember what I said." "Child what is wrong with you? You look like you just saw a ghost." "No ma'am, it's just a little hot in here. I went down several racks of clothes before I found a pretty dress. It still had the tag on it. I wonder why somebody would buy a little girl an expensive pretty dress and it had never been worn. It was a beautiful dress with flowers on it. I love to wear flowers even though the girls make fun of me. I went down some more rows and found two pair of trousers. They too had the tags still on them. It must be nice to be so rich that people give away clothes that had never been worn before. I felt like I hit the jackpot. I didn't mind shopping in this store if I could find brand new items like these. "Grandma, I've got three items and they brand new. Never been worn before." "Let me see what you got." I held my breath as my grandma studied

over each item and inspecting every inch of each piece. “Ya know these cost a li'l more since they brand new.” “Yes ma'am” I said as I held my head down. “Well, I think it's time to get ya something nice for a change.” “Oh, thank you grandma, I love you.” “Now ya just got to find some tops for those trousers and I don't mean no new tops either.” I looked table after table, going through piles of clothes. I didn't see anything that I liked. “May I help you with something sweetie?” said the sales lady. “I'm trying to find some nice tops to go with the trousers I've picked out.” “Well Earl just came with a truck load of new stuff. How about you have a look before I put them out?” “Well, my grandma said I can't pick out any new tops because they cost more.” [laughter] No sweetie I mean new as in he just brought them in. Let's go have a look.” We went into the back where they sort the clothes and priced them before putting them out in the store. “What's your name anyway?” “Rain, ma'am.” “Rain, that's a very different and off name. Is there a reason why yo mama named you Rain?” “No ma'am.” As I was going through the pile of clothes I noticed these were really nice clothes. Nothing like the ones in the store. “Rain, have a look at this top. I think it's very pretty and would go nicely with those blue trousers you have.” “That is really nice. Oh, but I can't buy that one.” “Why not, you like it don't you.” “Yes ma'am I really like it but it has the tag still on it. My grandma said I can't buy a new top because the new stuff cost more.” “I tell you what, how about I take this ol' tag off and give it to you for a used price? You're a pretty little girl and it will be my gift to you for being the first person I've ever met with a name like Rain.” “Oh, thank you ma'am, thank you so much.” “Besides, when you go to school you can make that li'l girl that threatened you jealous.” “You heard her?” “I sure did and I saw her poke you with her finger too. I don't like li'l mean girls.” “Thank you ma'am but why are you doing this for me?” “There is something special about you and I'm not sure what it is. Anyway, when God blesses you just receive it.” “Yes, ma'am.”