

SECRETS UNVEILED

CAROL CRAYTON



Outskirts Press, Inc.
Denver, Colorado

This is a work of fiction. The events and characters described herein are imaginary and are not intended to refer to specific places or living persons. The opinions expressed in this manuscript are solely the opinions of the author and do not represent the opinions or thoughts of the publisher. The author has represented and warranted full ownership and/or legal right to publish all the materials in this book.

Secrets Unveiled
All Rights Reserved.
Copyright © 2011 Carol Crayton
v1.0

Cover Photo © 2011 JupiterImages Corporation. All rights reserved - used with permission.

This book may not be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in whole or in part by any means, including graphic, electronic, or mechanical without the express written consent of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Outskirts Press, Inc.
<http://www.outskirtspress.com>

ISBN: 978-1-4327-8271-9

Outskirts Press and the “OP” logo are trademarks belonging to Outskirts Press, Inc.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Chapter 1

It was not much of a surprise to Erin's father when his daughter decided to enter religious life. It was he who walked through the alternatives with her as she tried to decide between secular and ecclesiastical worlds. He had never let on that he was startled by his eighteen year old daughter when she first voiced her interest in making drab colors and long hemlines her choice of fashion during the time of the psychedelic '60s. Oh, but shocked he was; and with this came a determination to dissuade his daughter from joining up with the very women who had rapped his knuckles as a young school boy. Using his power of logic, this father made a bargain with his daughter; he would pay for her to attend college, and then she could make a decision about entering the convent, with a Bachelor's Degree in hand. The bonus incentive was that any travel undergone throughout those years of schooling, would be paid for by him, no questions asked. There would be no pressure by any family members put upon Erin to return home for visits or holidays. In some way, he was preparing himself for what it would be like in the event that his daughter ultimately chose religious life.

CAROL CRAYTON

As a teenager who had grown up listening to anti-war, anti-establishment music and seeing posters laden with doves and peace symbols, this was too good to pass up for Erin. Anyone who listened to the news knew that most college campuses were hotbeds of anti-war demonstrations that were often fueled by problems brewing in overcrowded cities. Halls of academia would be the very arena in which the roots of commitment, the spirit of community, and the challenges of consensus would take place. This was the

1960s in the U.S.A., and it was not a time to walk away from the turbulence of change quite yet.

Since Erin's college tuition and travel expenses were paid for, she chose an in-state college which made more travel funds available to her wanderlust. The fact was that she did not want to be far from her father, since he would be living alone once she left home. In the back of her mind, she felt that her father's generosity compensated, in some way, for the guilt he carried after Erin's mother had died from a back room abortion.

Erin had been sixteen at the time, living in the protected façade of suburban New Jersey, the only child of two loving Irish parents who named Erin after her great-grandmothers. One of the magical moments of her parents' first meeting was discovering that their grandmothers had the same given name. They vowed that their first daughter would be named for the strong women of the "old country". That is how it was with Erin's parents; they interpreted coincidence more in terms of destiny.

Erin had mixed feelings about her mother's pregnancy. Her focus, as a teenager, was on her peers who mysteriously

disappeared from school mid-year after rumors of unwanted pregnancies spread throughout the girls' high school locker room. Public school health teachers never spoke directly about ways to prevent pregnancies, except to say that girls were to keep their legs crossed whenever they were alone with boys. However, recalling her health teacher's explanation of the process of fertilization, Erin became grossed out by the bedroom scene she imagined preceding the conception of her future brother or sister. As a result, she tried hard to ignore the fact that her mother was pregnant and that she could likely share a hospital room with one of Erin's classmates. Nothing prepared her for the ultimate outcome of her mother's pregnancy. According to his tearful confession after his wife's burial, Erin's father had pressured his wife into obtaining an abortion because he did not want to be a father to a young child while approaching the years that would have qualified him as a young grandfather. Both parents were Roman Catholics by baptism, but not by belief; so Erin's mother did not use her faith as an argument. She wanted to nurture a baby, but felt the conflict of her husband and the practicality of growing old gracefully without the pressures of motherhood. Since Erin had been their only child, they both resolved to keep it that way. Through a network of girlfriends, Erin's mother arranged to have the abortion in the back room of a pharmacy in New York City. She hemorrhaged, went into shock, and died before the ambulance got her to the hospital. Erin lost a sister or a brother that day, along with her mother.

Prior to her mother's death, abortion had no personal meaning to Erin. Her world was based on the assumption

CAROL CRAYTON

that if a girl got pregnant and did not want to keep the baby, she would put it up for adoption, not abort it. Unlike her parents, the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were fresh in Erin's mind, and abortion was never to be an option. Not once did she consider the possibility that her mother would undergo an abortion, a procedure that was not only taboo with the Church, but also illegal by the government. Her security became shattered by the consequences of her parents' decision. Life no longer held any absolutes for Erin. Yes, she was angry and sad, but her feelings gradually re-directed toward other women posed with similar choices. She placed individuals into a larger context of society as she realized that there was no clear line between suburban and urban areas; people were people and despite their different appearances, social class, and economic level, all were posed with the same life and death choices. Erin became more philosophical, relying more on faith and idealism. Her interest in helping others began to outweigh her need to be helped out of mourning.

Rather than alienate daughter from father, the death of Erin's mother brought daughter and father closer together in their neediness and loneliness. It was never more evident than when Erin and her father were left standing at her mother's gravesite after the burial. Through tears of pain and abandonment, Erin reached out to her father with tentativeness, hoping he would wrap his long, protective arms around her. The blurry image of her father's smile unhinged Erin's reserve as she allowed her body to relax into the warmth of his embrace. Father and daughter struggled through their tears knowing that all they had was each other. There was no

way of hanging on to any blame she held toward her father; her mother had agreed to the procedure, and any remnants of blame stayed buried in her grave. She had abandoned Erin with her decision. Two years later, her father brokered the college deal with Erin. For a while longer, she would stay in his life.