

CRYSTAL FOUNTAIN

by Casey Bell

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Sometimes I can still hear Liver barking, or see the construction workers building new homes, and smell the barbecue wafting from the neighbors Viking grill. Sometimes when I see little children playing, I see Mark and I climbing trees and getting ourselves into trouble. It's weird how memories live on forever. No matter how old you get, it seems like the oldest memories return, even when you don't want them to.

I was born August 19, 1979 to the proud parents, John and Susan Winters. I was their first born. They decided to name me Jeremy. The earliest memory I have was when I was around three or four years old. At that time, we were living in a two-bedroom apartment. My mom was a stay-at-home mom, only because my parents didn't have the money for preschool or a babysitter. My dad was working for a telephone company and going to law school. The thing I remember the most was that we didn't have much. Any time I saw something on the television and would ask for it, my mother would respond, we really don't have the money for that, but just you wait. Once your daddy graduates and gets a job we will have all the money in the world. It wasn't until I was

five that he finally graduated. I remember going to the graduation. I watched my father get his diploma. My mother was extremely happy; she was also three months pregnant with my baby sister. After he graduated and passed the bar it took him about five months to secure a job with a law firm. We still didn't have much at first, but as time went by my dad would bring surprises home. I remember a day in October, he brought home a new station wagon; he said he knew we would need it with the new baby coming. By then my mom was eight months pregnant and ready to deliver (something she would always say). At this time, I remember seeing less of my father. He would work from eight in the morning until seven at night and by the time he came home he was so tired. He would play with me and talk to me for a little while, but it wasn't like when he was working for the telephone company. My mother would always explain to me that that was the way it had to be, that lawyers had to work a lot. She would try to make me feel better by saying it was a good thing because it meant that daddy would be able to buy me whatever I wanted, but I didn't care at that moment, I just wanted my dad. I used to pray at night that my dad would lose his job and that we would go back to the way things used to be. I didn't care at that

time that it meant being middle class or cutting corners or not getting everything, I wanted, but those prayers never worked. However, things did get better. As the days went on my father saved up enough money for us to move, but we didn't move until after my sister, Sarah was born. She was born on November 22, 1984. It was about two months later that we started to pack. On March 5, 1985 we officially moved into our new home. It was huge; it had four bedrooms, three and a half bathrooms, a dining room, kitchen, living room, a den, a laundry room, basement, two-car garage, and an attic. It was a far distance a way from where we used to live, but my dad said it was less expensive to live there. I didn't understand it, but I did like the house. It was in a complex called Crystal Fountain. I will never forget that name. It's where most if not all my memories are. It's where I grew up and met all my friends. The complex was still new. At the time we moved there were houses still being built. Including our home, there were nine homes in the development. The thing I remember the most about Crystal Fountain were the people who lived in the houses.

Verma Jean Thompson was the first one to welcome us to the development. She was known as

Momma Jean. She was like the mother of the neighborhood and just about everyone respected her, some were just afraid of her. Everyone knew not to mess with her, get in her way, or even get on her bad side. She had a way of making you think twice before speaking to her, because you never wanted to say the wrong thing to her. She spoke her mind and always made sure you knew her opinion. She said things as she saw them and she never cared whether or not you were offended. Sometimes it seemed like she said things to offend. She was an old school mother. She didn't care who your parents were, if she saw you misbehaving, she would spank you in a minute. Overall, she was a nice person to be around; she liked her peace and quiet. If it got too loud, she'd be out of her house to quiet down the neighborhood. I don't know how old she was because she always looked very young, but I knew she was old. She lived alone. Her children were grown and married with children. She was widowed and if you got the chance to sit with her on her porch, she would always tell stories about her husband. Everyone would go over to her house to visit, especially to seek out advice. She would welcome anyone, as she would say; "who is decent minded and knows how to respect themselves." Her

children would visit on Christmas, Resurrection Day, Mother's Day, and during her birth anniversary. I remember those times, because she would have so many people coming over to her house. She had four children, eight grandchildren, three sisters, four brothers, and a whole slew of aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and cousins coming into town. Mama Jean was the one I remember the most.

Kenneth and Barbara Standards, the vacationers, lived across the street. They were barely home. They were retired and all of their children had moved out so they would vacation for weeks. Once they returned, they would usually share their pictures and memorabilia with the neighborhood. It seems like they went everywhere, they would travel to Florida, Hawaii, England, Italy, Israel, China, Nigeria, and so many other places, and they would always bring home gifts and trinkets from their travels. They were in their mid 50's and it seems like their life just had started. Their children would visit for the holidays as well. They had three children and four grandchildren. Their youngest son Christopher would visit more often, in fact he would baby sit my sister and I sometimes.

Edward Hill was another neighbor who was rarely

home. He was the only one who had the guts to disrespect Mama Jean. Mama Jean disliked him very much. Well, the whole neighborhood wasn't too fond of him. He would be away from home days on end because of his job, to this day I don't know what he did for a living. However, he had a dog, Liver. Liver would bark loudly, and for long period of times, pretty much trying to get the attention of Edward, who wasn't home. Every time Edward would finally return home, everyone in the neighborhood would tell him he shouldn't have a pet if he wasn't going to be home to care for it. He would ignore their comments and continue about his day. Mama Jean and he were always arguing. Edward used to always say he would hate to have to come home because he knew Mama Jean would be in his face. He would be home for about a week or two before leaving again for weeks. One time he left and didn't return for two months. Everyone would enjoy his return because we all knew that was the only time his dog would be the quietest.

Another friendly neighbor and the patriarch of the community was William McCarter. We lovingly called him Papa Bill. He was 88 years old and a veteran of both World Wars. He would tell stories about the service and the other wars he witnessed. He was actually against war

and fighting and would always say no matter how many wars or battles you fight you can never win. He was fun to be around because his stories were intriguing and he would always have chocolate to share.

Another neighbor living in Crystal, believe or not was Zelda Zeal. She was another not at home on a regular basis. She would live in her home for the seasons she wasn't in Hollywood making a film. Thankfully for her and for us the paparazzi didn't know she had a home in Crystal Fountain. She lived a peaceful life in Crystal thanks to Mama Jean. Mama Jean made sure no one in the neighborhood would hassle her for pictures or autographs. She would, however, sign something for you, but Mama Jean made sure Zelda got her peace and quiet.

Then there were the Matthew's. I remember them just as much as I remember Mama Jean, because their son Mark was a close friend of mine. Robert and Linda Matthew's are their names. I spent many days and nights in their house. Mark and I would spend the night at each others' home many times on the weekends and especially during the summer.

The Pearson's were another family I knew pretty well. Peter and Regina had two children, Michael and Camille. Camille was my age we would play together

along with Mark and Kathryn.

Kathryn Bisco was the last of the nine, Daniel and Cassandra were owners of a near by drugstore, Bisco's Family Drug Store. We used to hang out there a lot and we would help around the store sometimes.

At this time, we were the nine families living in Crystal Fountain. As time moved on more homes were built and more families moved in. We all witnessed people moving in, moving out, great trauma, and amusing times.

CHAPTER TWO

1985-1986

Moving into Crystal Fountain was fun. During the move my parents took me to Franklin McCooper Elementary School to sign me up for first grade. Although, I didn't start school until September of 1985 she thought it would be good to get an early start. During the months March through June, it was kind of lonely. The only children my age in the area were all in kindergarten. My mother decided not to enroll me being that the school year was almost over, plus she said she could teach me the same things. Mark, Kathryn, and Camille were all in the afternoon classes so I had no one to play with until they came home. Every now and then I would go over to Mark's house in the morning, but for the most part I staid at home until 3 in the afternoon. Once Mark would come home, he would tell all about what he learned and did in class. He would bring his projects home and show me the different things they had made. Kathryn would take me to her house and she would help make my own projects. And sometimes we would play school and Camille would be the teacher. Camille would pretty much teach me everything their teacher taught them. It was pretty cool because I was getting the same teaching as them, but I

never stepped foot into the school. Once school was over times got better. The four of us didn't do much during the summer other than the basics. We would ride our bikes in the neighborhood and sometimes out of the neighborhood. When we would travel out of the neighborhood Mark would take us to some of the strangest places. He said when he would be in the car with his parents, he would see places he wanted to go. One time he took us to this wooded area with swamp like lakes. He said he saw someone walking back to the area one day and wanted to see for himself what it was. It wasn't much to see. Most of the time Mark and I spent the time at his house playing Atari or we would sit and watch the construction workers as they built new homes in the development. We both had fun watching the construction site, but Mark was more fascinated than I. He would always say; I'm going to be doing that one day. Sometimes the four of us would ride our bikes to the park or find something to occupy the time. The summer ended soon and I was entering my first year in public school.

September 1985: I started my first year in McCooper with confidence thanks to Mark, Kathryn, and Camille. Not only did they teach me the lessons they

learned in kindergarten, they talked to me about school and what it was like and about meeting new friends. Everything they said about the school made me even the more excited to go. The four of us pretty much did everything together; we walked to school together, played together, and studied together. Mark and I, however, were closer. Mark was the first one I met in the Crystal development. I was happy to go to school, however, the one thing Mark and the ladies left out was the lack of friends we would have. The children in school were either nice to us or mean. For the most part they were jealous. Everyone knew what it meant to live in Crystal Fountain. It was a development full of luxurious houses. Just to say you live in Crystal Fountain meant that your family was very wealthy. I actually didn't feel so good talking about living in Crystal, because I knew we still didn't have much. All we had was everything we brought over from our apartment and we still had furniture that needed to be purchased.

My first-grade teacher's name was Mrs. Nestor. She was the only black teacher in the school. It made Mark feel good, because at the time he was the only black student in the class. The school itself had very few black students and not too many other ethnicities. It was a

predominately Caucasian school and neighborhood. Mrs. Nestor was a very kind teacher and it was easy to learn from her. Mark and I were in her class together, while Kathryn and Camille were in another class, Ms. Diver was her name. The only time we ever got to spend time together was at gym, lunch, and recess. There was this other time, I remember the two first grade classes got together to do a play for the school. I don't remember the name of it, but it had to do with holidays, their seasons and the seasons' weather. I remember Mark and I being New Year's Day. The four of us were very tight because we didn't socialize that much in school. Most of the students didn't talk to us because they thought we were spoiled rich children. There was this one student who really hated us, Bilfred Ruddy, everyone called him Freddy. He was the class bully, well, to us anyway. He would tell everyone stories about us and everyone would believe them. However, there were two classmates who didn't like Bilfred and for that sake would talk to us, just to make him upset. Elizabeth and Thomas would sit with us during lunch and talk to us. At first, they did it just to make Freddy upset, but after they got to know us, they realized we were just a bunch of silly children, like themselves. They would frequent the Crystal

neighborhood, when their parents would allow it. My first year in school was not that bad, it ended pretty quickly, and the summer months came in.

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