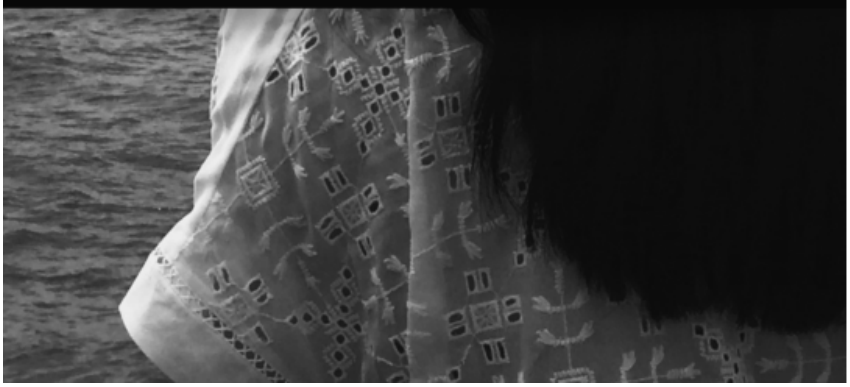
From the author of *Unkept* and *A Violent Hope*

A DIARY OF SORTS

Between You and Me

ERICKA CLAY



Between You and Me

Ericka Clay

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This is a creative work. Similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.

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From the Author

The following are bits of my brain I once posted on Instagram. Or maybe more accurately, they're bits of my heart.

Following Jesus isn't a perfect script printed in back and white. It's a total loss of self and sometimes loss of words only to be given them back when you need them. It's an overly processed account of what plays on in the human understanding, knowing God is still keeping time with your steps. It's the confession, the hard repentance, the acceptance of truth much holier than all the bits of your brain and heart combined.

It's everything.

1. Between You and Me

May the Lord
Keep watch
between you
And me
when we
Are away
From
Each other
But even so,
When we
Are held close
And all I
Can smell
Is the human
frankness
Of My
Own
Misunderstanding.

2. And Sometimes I Hear God Laughing

A friend mentioned how hard it must be having a kid during the world's current state of affairs.

I laughed. I don't worry about the world corrupting Ava. I worry about Ava corrupting the world.

She is a force, my friends.

There is a term. Neurodivergent.

I thought at first it was another fancy way of further sowing divisiveness through the human race, and maybe it is. But I found an article that made my heart smile.

A list of people (myself included) are neurotypical. We hit all the marks when it comes to the way our brains function. People like typical. They like easy.

They take issue with different. Sometimes, I do too.

And sometimes I hear God laughing.

ADHD (along with autism and a few other conditions) are considered neurodivergent. The way people think with these conditions is nothing short of amazing. Day to day truths try to conceal this notion. Holding somebody's hand and helping them walk to the finish line when all they want to do is bolt in the other direction isn't easy. But I know it's my purpose here on earth.

I've never met another person so creative. I've never met someone so passionately willing to take up her cause no matter how trivial it seems. I've never met someone willing to say the things that burden our hearts and heads but the rest of us are too cowardly to voice.

The world. That's what I worry about.

Jesus made every neuron to fire the way it does. He made her heart and hands and an unrivaled beauty that is sometimes marred by sin. But he gave her that passion in her belly to wake up and face the day with her soul facing north.

She'll never know the depths of an unwanted depression, the dark pool where I sometimes sink my feet.

She will know light and God's spirit in her breast.

So no matter the circumstances around us, the world...the world is what I worry about.

3. Lay It All Down

Motherhood. If ever there was a reason for Wine Wednesday. But I think that's the problem. That old question: from where does my help come from? When we look around, it most certainly doesn't come from God.

Instead, we take note from the self-help gurus or the new age shamans or the bottle of Jack we keep in the closet. We eat chocolate quietly by ourselves and drink coffee until our eyes go red.

We listen to all the "shoulds" from people who don't understand how our hearts are breaking and flaking a tiny dust storm in our chests and take another trip to Target to nurse our wounds with a little retail therapy.

And that's when we see her: the perfect mother. The one that plagues our nightmares, haunts our dreams. She's the inner core of the person we wish we were. And no amount of downer or upper will ever make her the tangible person we see in the mirror.

But Christ laid it down so that we could be defined by Him. And when we're defined by who He says we are, all the "shoulds" begin to deteriorate and the "are" comes out to play.

You ARE the mother you were meant to be for your children.

You ARE a beautiful child of God.

You ARE meant to be a part of the kingdom.

The only question is are you ready to lay it all down, too?

4. A Penniless Endeavor

We tiptoe
Into our dance,
Smile like smiling
Is a penniless
Endeavor,
But how bankrupt
Are the bones
That never knew
The cost
Of true
Submission.

5. In the Never Was

I get so mad sometimes because I don't know if you know this, but it wasn't supposed to be this way.

There are different versions of the same dream. They vary to the point of morphing into different dreams entirely. Ones where I know the outcome each and every time: I. WIN.

But here's the thing about other people: you can't control them. And ultimately, they're woven into the fiber of each of these dreams. They know their parts but won't play.

Because they don't have to. They're the stars of their own stories.

My daughter. She lives a whole life I can't control. And as someone who's naturally battled anxiety since she was sixteen, this is a real bummer. She was supposed to be a brainiac with a penchant for writing and a horrible superiority complex quite like...well...her mother.

But no. She's a wild heart. She has empathy for others where her mother doesn't. She lives in a beautiful world made in her own mind and has a gentle mastery over animals. She is willing to work out her blind spots, those dark stains in her being that sometimes cause others to approach her at arm's length.

She's not quietly judgmental. Again, like her mother.

She is loudly compassionate and is willing to still love an aging woman who is treading water in the never was.

She is the mirror God granted me to peer into the face of my own soul.

She's the dream I would have never thought to dream.

6. The Cost of Losing Everything

I don't want my daughter to be happy. I want her to live with integrity.

And sometimes, those are two very different things.

The other day, I mentioned the difference between living religiously and following Jesus. My friend mentioned she hadn't considered the difference before, and I understand that mode of thinking. For a long time, I never realized there was a difference either. It's because so many people have sullied what it means to be a Jesus follower. They take rules and tradition and manmade doctrine and ways you must look and dress and live in order to be a REAL Christian, all the while destroying the very essence of the Gospel.

If your heart isn't focused on building relationships with those that don't look or think like you and giving them a soft place to land, then you need to take a moment and have a heart-to-heart with God. You can know every ounce of Scripture and still be a Pharisee.

You can memorize all the Bible verses you want. If you don't live them, then what's the point?

And trust me, I'm writing this more to myself than you.

I don't want my daughter to be an "in name only" Christian. I want her to be the kind that willingly gives her life for another. I want her to be the kind of person that doesn't get squeezed out in our current state of affairs but lives boldly and courageously with a heart for God.

Make no mistake. The world is different now. And if your only goal is for your kids to be happy in this mess we call Earth, then you're doing them a huge disservice.

Teach them instead the cost of losing everything and how that's worth so much more than a feeling they can't even hold in their hands.

7. Heaven Knows

An interesting something happened last night.

I became a crazy person.

Okay, well not really. There was a group of teenagers at a booth near us who kept joking loudly and looking our way. I honestly don't even think what they were saying had anything to do with us, but once my daughter locked eyes with them, it was all over. She wasn't having the absurdity.

And here's something: I'm the quintessential introverted only child. I don't make a fuss when a fuss isn't necessary. Which in my book is 99.9% of the time. But I also come from a long line of Latina women who don't mess around.

Let's just say my genetics seem to be continually at odds.

And then, I'm of course a Christ follower. I want to honor God and his children, even the ones who are hell bent on tomfoolery.

So you can see how the storm started to brew.

I've done this before. Once at my doubles tennis game where two guys were catcalling me and my partner during our match. And once at Best Buy when the Geek Squad took my laptop hostage for weeks. I most definitely wasn't a Christ follower back then and became, well, blackout rageous in both instances.

I highly don't recommend that.

I felt my blood boiling just like those times. I was up on my feet before I knew what I was doing. I was talking and saying words, but this time, there was a difference.

I cried out to the Holy Spirit in my heart.

I didn't curse them out. I didn't scream my head off. I just mentioned how I was young and fun once (no seriously...like literally once), but if they could play it cool and not be so loud, I'd appreciate it.

Remember that whole WWJD phase? Besides being a glaring representation of how people "follow" Jesus whenever it's in vogue, it's also

something I roll around in my mind every second of the day. Because I don't want to be what He's not.

I'm not sure how well I did. But I am grateful for the lifeline. Because heaven knows I can't save myself.

8. This Jagged Piece of Glass

He's wading through
And stacking up
The puzzle pieces
I cut with this jagged
Piece of glass, and
When I sneak peaks
Behind my shoulder,
There it is.
Our life.

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