

Amazing  
Grace



# Amazing Grace

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*Grace is the divine means by which God makes himself  
everything we need to utterly abound.*

—2 Corinthians 9:8



# ACKNOWLEDGMENT



IN LOVING MEMORY OF my grandmother, Sarah B. Davis, who passed away many years ago. She would have loved this story! It is also dedicated to the women in my life, including my mom, LaJean Hewitt, and her best friend, Jackie Allen, who was like a second mom to me and always encouraged my love of books. And to the rest of the women—my sisters, my daughters, my granddaughters, my aunts, my nieces, my cousins, and my friends. Without all of your influence (and some of your names), this story would not have been the same. Thank you for your support. I hope you enjoy my story.



# PROLOGUE



THE YOUNG MAN WALKED along the side of the road, carrying the heavy box. He stopped now and then to rest a bit and peeked sadly inside. Eventually, he trudged on. He saw a bus at the bus stop just ahead and hurried to the door. Pulling out the last of his money, he bought a ticket to the farthest point possible from where he had come. Nobody knew about what was in the box, so there was nobody to care or wonder where she had gone. His friend had left her and disappeared. She had talked about trying to find her a home, but now that was left for him to do. He couldn't take care of her. He was just another runaway himself. He had no job right now and never stayed in one place for long. But he couldn't just leave her. He had to find a place for her where someone would take care of her. And he had to do it tonight. There was only one bottle, a few instant formula packets, and a few diapers left. He had placed her nicest blanket under her, stuffed the few clothes that he could find around her in the box to help keep her warm and put an old knit hat on her head. He found an old blanket to

wrap around the top of the box when he stopped to rest. It was January, and it was cold outside.

As the bus rumbled on and the baby slept, he dozed off. Several hours later, the bus came to a stop, and he was jerked awake. He picked up the box and headed down the bus steps. In the bus station, he went in the tiny restroom and locked the door. He sat the box on the floor and lifted her out. Placing her on the rickety changing table, he changed her diaper, hooking it like he had seen his friend do many times over the past couple of months. At least she would be dry. He refastened her sleeper and placed her back in the box. He held the bottle to her lips, but she didn't seem interested, so he put it back in the box beside her. He closed the box, picked it up, and headed outside. It was still cold and dark, but he could tell that nighttime was fading, and it would soon be dawn. He had to find a safe place for her before daylight.

He trudged along, looking for a church or school or somewhere he might leave her where she would be found and cared for. Just as he was starting to give up hope, a large house loomed up out of the darkness. Above the first floor windows was a sign that said "Heavenly Home for Girls." Perfect! He walked up the steps with a feeling of relief. He wrote a quick note and tucked it down in the bottom corner of the box, noticing she had fallen back asleep. He wrapped the old blanket around her, making sure she could still get air, and closed the box carefully to

protect her as much as possible from the cold, noticing that the bushes around the front of the house would hide the box from view of the street. He placed the box up against the door, looked around to make sure nobody was watching, and walked away. As he went, he prayed silently, *Lord, please protect this child and help her to live a happy life. Amen.*





THEY FOUND HER OUTSIDE the school door one sunny January morning. She was bundled in a ragged old blanket inside a brown cardboard box with other miscellaneous clothing stuffed around her in an attempt to keep her warm. When Sarah went out to get the morning mail, she almost stumbled over the box. The baby's eyes were closed when Sarah pulled back the blanket, and she feared the baby might not be alive. Then the baby opened her dark-blue eyes and looked directly at her. Sarah snatched up the box and made her way back in the building, grabbing the mail so Mrs. Harper would not be mad, struggling to juggle the box and mail and get the door opened without dropping anything. The old woman would not be happy if her mail was late, and Sarah was already worrying about what Mrs. Harper would do with this new addition.

Once inside, there was no sign of Mrs. Harper, and her door was closed, so Sarah set the box down and placed the mail on the little table outside her office. She carefully

carried the box into the huge room that Mrs. Harper insisted on calling the parlor and once again pulled back the blanket from the baby's face. The baby was quiet as Sarah pushed away the blanket and lifted her out of the box. Her little body seemed cool to the touch, although she was dressed in a very thick blanket sleeper in a faded shade of pink. Her head was covered by an old knitted hat, but her cheeks were rosy with the cold. Sarah gathered the baby close to her own body, trying to warm her up a bit. She heard a gurgling sound from the infant, so she lowered her back to her lap and spoke soothingly to her while removing the hat. Almost immediately, the baby responded to Sarah with the cutest smile Sarah had ever seen!

Sarah knew she would be in big trouble if she didn't tell Mrs. Harper about the baby, so she put her carefully back in the box and headed over to Mrs. Harper's office door. She knocked hesitantly. Mrs. Harper must have been on the phone because she told her to go away, or she would be sorry. Mrs. Harper hated to be interrupted by one of the girls when she was on the phone. Now what was she going to do?

Sarah heard little Lucy crying upstairs, so she hurried back into the parlor for the baby and headed up the stairs. When she got upstairs, she set the box on her bed and tended to Lucy, who had just woken up and was hungry. She went to their cupboard and pulled out the last package of biscuits and broke one in half and handed it to Lucy. Once Lucy was quiet, she called all the girls to come over

and see her surprise. There were ten girls, including Sarah, all ranging in age from three to eleven. Sarah was the oldest at eleven, and Lucy was the youngest at three. Little Nora was four; Olivia was six; the twins, Sophie and Emma, were seven; Maddi and Gabbi were eight, and Katie and Kodi were nine. Sarah picked up the baby and held her gently on her lap. The girls looked at her in awe! They all started jostling one another to get closer, so Sarah quickly made room so all could see. The baby looked at them, blinked a couple of times, and promptly stuck her thumb in her mouth, which made them all giggle.

Katie asked to hold the baby, so Sarah handed her to Katie and cautioned her to be very careful with her. She scurried around, helping the younger girls get dressed, make their beds, and tidy up before Mrs. Harper came up to check things out. She would not be happy if things were not in order, and most of the time, she took it out on Sarah since she was the oldest. By the time everything was tidied up, the baby had started to fuss a bit. Sarah pulled open the box again, taking a better look at what was inside. Underneath the miscellaneous clothes that had been tucked around the infant, Sarah found a stack of disposable diapers and several packets of instant formula. She also found a bottle of milk! She quickly opened the bottle and smelled the milk, hoping it wasn't spoiled. It smelled okay, so she screwed the cap back on and walked over to the baby to see if that would quiet her. The milk was cold, but the

baby sucked on the bottle happily, so Sarah settled her with Kodi, who was dressed and had finished tidying her area. Then she hurried to help Katie do the same.

Once the baby had finished her bottle, she started to cry. Sarah hurried to Kodi and took the baby, hoping to quiet her before Mrs. Harper heard her. She could tell the little one had a soggy diaper, so she put her carefully on her bed and pulled out a diaper to change her. She seemed to know instinctively how to take care of her. The baby continued to whimper until the wet diaper had been replaced with a dry one. As Sarah bent to pick up the baby, who had stopped crying, Mrs. Harper appeared at the top of the stairs. "What is going on up here!" she shouted.

Mrs. Harper had black hair that she wore in a very tight bun. She wore a dark skirt and a white blouse every day, and her blouse tended to come untucked a bit when she moved around or bent over. She seemed horribly mean to the girls. She rarely had a kind word for anyone, and she yelled a *lot!* Her voice was sort of screechy-sounding when she yelled, almost fake-sounding, which made the girls nervous. She was always threatening to throw them out if she didn't like what they were doing, and she once told Sarah she would lock them in the basement if they didn't keep things picked up. Luckily for them, she was also very forgetful. Often she forgot what she was doing and didn't make good on her threats. Some days she stayed in her office, and the girls didn't see her all day. Those were the good days.

When she saw Sarah holding the baby, she marched over to her. “Where did you get that baby!” she screamed in her face.

“I found her on the doorstep this morning when I went to get the mail,” Sarah replied. “Isn’t she adorable?”

“Adorable!” Mrs. Harper screeched. “Do you know what it costs to take care of a baby these days? Put her back immediately!”

“But Mrs. Harper,” Sarah argued, “it’s so cold outside. We have to call someone. Please.”

“Fine,” Mrs. Harper tried to snarl, but it came out a bit shaky. “I’ll call Child Protective Services, and they can come and get the brat!” She marched off down the stairs, but Sarah saw her look back over her shoulder with a worried look on her face.

“Don’t worry, girls!” Sarah said as she noticed that the little ones were upset at Mrs. Harper’s screaming. “Maybe she’ll forget. Let’s pretend this is our new baby sister, and Mama has left her in our care while she gets us groceries. Who wants to hold her first? Be careful now and make sure everyone gets to hold her for a bit. Katie and Kodi, can you help the little ones?”

As Sarah kept a close eye on her little brood, she heard a sweet giggle from Nora as the baby looked at her and smiled. She went about her normal cleaning, checking their bathroom, straightening towels, and picking up a stray article of clothing here and there. This was a nice change

for the girls, and the baby seemed content going from one to the other amid coos and giggles. If only it could always be like this. But Sarah knew from past experience that the element of unpleasantness could creep back and surround them at a moment's notice.