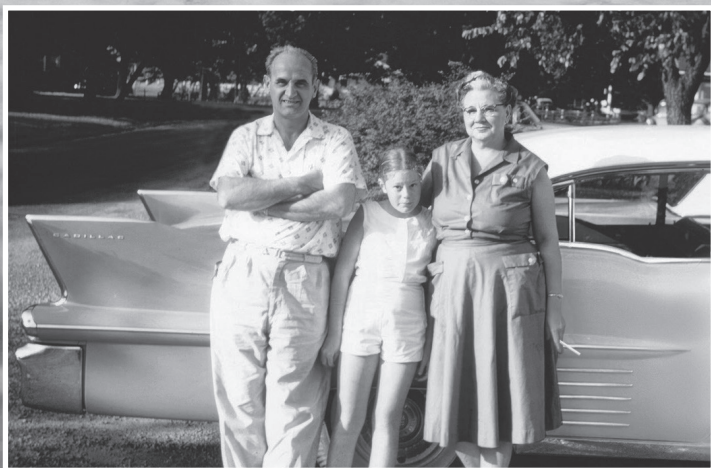


Dr. Beare's Daughter

Growing Up Adopted, Adored, and Afraid
A TRUE STORY



JANICE JONES

Dr. Beare's Daughter
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This is a work of creative nonfiction. The events portrayed are presented to the best of the author's memory, and verified with research. All persons in the book are real. The names and identifying characteristics of some individuals have been changed to protect their privacy. Dialogue has been created consistent with the author's memory of persons and events.

Summary: In this true story set in the 1950s and '60s, an adopted only child finds herself an outlier in her small town of Celina, Ohio, while struggling to be the golden child she imagines her charismatic doctor-daddy and easily hurt socialite mother really wanted, while also coping with the strict rules of the Catholic Church.

Daddy's Little Girl
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For my children

Ralph Jones and

Rachel Smith

And my grandchildren

Luka Jones

Niko Jones

Andrew Jones

Charlie Jones

and

Those who come after

At that, Silver-hair woke in a fright,
and jumped out of the window and ran away
as fast as her legs could carry her, and never went near
the Three Bears' snug little house again.

—Robert Southey, *The Three Bears*

From the Author

Dear Reader,

I am seventy-seven years old, and time moves so quickly now, I could sneeze and find myself to be eighty. I feel compelled to share my story with the world, because stories must be told, or they die with the person who lived them.

As you read, I hope you find connections between my story and your own, and that you find in those connections that somehow, we are all family.

May 3, 1981

Daddy was dying in the hospital's hospice wing. He was drifting in and out of a coma, each breath a strangled gurgle. Mother and I were sitting with him. It was late afternoon, and we'd been there since early morning. With her heart condition and diabetes, Mother looked so old and used up that I was afraid she might faint.

I took Daddy's hand and told him I was going to take Mother back to the apartment.

He stirred, opened his eyes, and fixed them on me. "Go take care of her . . . Kiddo." His voice was a raspy whisper. He took a labored breath, then muttered, "Make sure . . . she eats . . . takes her insulin . . . put her to bed . . . then . . ." His voice ran out.

I said, "We'll be back in the morning to sit with you."

He opened his mouth, closed it, opened it again. "I won't be . . . here . . . in the morning . . ."

I turned to Mother and said, "I'll be right back." I went to the nurse's station and asked Daddy's nurse, "Can you tell me if my father will last the night?"

She looked at me kindly, shook her head, and said, "I'll be very surprised if he does."

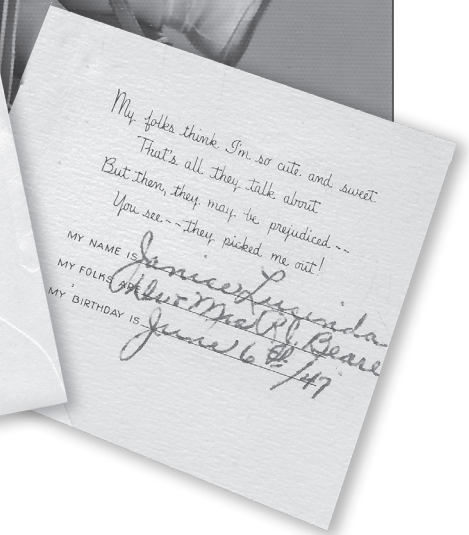
I felt a boa constrictor wrap itself around my heart. I walked back into Daddy's room. Mother saw me, got up, and walked wearily into the hall, expecting me to follow.

I went to Daddy. I kissed him gently on the forehead. His eyes fluttered open. He said, "I'm going to die, and not . . . one . . . of my

family will be here . . . with me.” The boa constrictor tightened its coils and squeezed.

Searching my face, Daddy whispered, “Take your Mother home. Then come back, Kiddo. I’ll wait . . . for . . . you.” His eyes closed and forced a tear down one sallow cheek.

That vicious snake clamped down on my heart and tried to force the life out of it. I grabbed the IV pole to keep myself from falling. . . .





Mommy and me

Photo by Paul Beirsdorfer

The Three Beavers

My birthday is June 8, 1947, but I wasn't born. I was adopted. When I was four-and-a-half months old. My parents named me Janice Lucinda. *Janice* because "it couldn't be shortened into something gawd-awful" and *Lucinda* after my new mother.

The first thing I remember is sitting on my mother's lap in the big chair while she read me *The Book*.¹ I can't forget it because she read it to me every day my first few years.



Every day, I have to sit still while Mommy reads me The Book. In The Book, a happily married couple were sad because they had no babies. So they went to a Home to choose one. The Book showed three babies at the Home, floating in high chairs on an all-white page. They were wearing bibs and waving spoons like they were hungry, but no one was feeding them. There were no mommies in the Home. The only grown-up was a lady on another page talking on the phone. Why doesn't The Book show her face?

The happily married couple looked at the first baby and didn't want him. *What was wrong with him?* The wife held the second baby on her lap. Then the married couple just knew he was their chosen baby. *How did they know that? They didn't even look at the third baby. What happened to him? And that first one who had something wrong*

with him? The couple took their chosen baby home. The Book showed the baby with his new parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, all with happy faces. *Thank goodness he has a real home with real people to love him. The Home is an empty place where no one pays attention to the babies.*

Every time Mommy shut the book, she said, "That's how we got you. I was so excited the day we went to Dayton to pick you up. Other mommies and daddies have to take what they get, but we *chose* you. And that makes you special."

The Home must be in Dayton! If Mommy and Daddy hadn't picked me, I'd still be floating around in the Home, hungry. Why did they choose me? They have dark hair and nice skin. I have red hair and ugly freckles. Didn't the home have any babies that look like them? If they decide they don't like me, can they take me back?

Then Mommy said, "Like the couple in the book, I love you as if you were my own." *Since I'm not her own, I'm glad she loves me anyway.*

Daddy never read me The Book. He sat with me in the big chair and played me his favorite record on the Scott—his giant radio that had a record player. Daddy sang along with the record about how I'm the pot of gold at the end of his rainbow and I'm sugar and spice—everything nice. He lifted me up in his strong hands and held me above him, so my face was right on top of his. He smiled, his brown eyes got shiny, and he sang, "And you're Daddy's Little Girl."²

Daddy doesn't love me AS IF I were his own. He thinks I AM his own.

Daddy was Doctor Ralph Beare. Our last name is said "bear"—like the big, hairy animal that lives in the woods. One of Daddy's ancestors added that fancy E. It's quiet. Don't say it.

Daddy had an artist draw my picture, and he hung it above the Scott. Mommy's sisters made a plaque that sat on the Scott. Three

bears (without the E)—a papa bear, a mama bear, and a baby bear.
Under the picture, it said:

Ralph, Lou, and Janice
“The Three Beares”



Sometimes I wish it was the FOUR Beares. If I had a brother or sister . . . I only have Dainty and Doss, my special friends. I'm the only one who can see them.

We lived in Celina. It's a little city in Ohio. From the time I could walk, Daddy took me with him to the grocery, the gas station, the bank, the hardware store, the newsstand, the drugstore, the hospital, the tire and supply store—everywhere. People always stopped to talk to him. They thanked him for saving their mother's, grandma's, or baby's life. Then they bent down to tell me about it. “Your daddy was out to my farm to help my wife who was in a bad way while having our baby.



Daddy and me going all those places

While Doc was delivering our baby in the bedroom, Grandpa had a heart attack in the living room. Your daddy ran back and forth and saved Grandpa, my wife, *and* the baby.’ *Everybody likes Daddy. He’s a hero.*

Daddy took me with him on house calls to the farms. Even when I was just four, he had me hold the pan of syringes. The syringes had on cotton jackets, and the pan had alcohol in it. I had to be careful not to spill it. *Daddy trusts me with an important job.* On Sundays, after Mass and a restaurant dinner, Mommy took her nap. While she napped,

Daddy took me for fast drives in the country to road races and drag races. We went into the pits so Daddy could look at engines and talk to men about how to make the cars go faster. I got tired of standing in the sun, hearing about horsepower and superchargers. *Shouldn't I be the one staying home and taking a nap? I need my nap.*

Even though my name is *Janice*, most grown-ups thought it was *Doctor Beare's Daughter*. I was maybe five years old and waiting for Daddy outside a store when a big boy teased me. "Where'd you get all those freckles?" I looked at my shoes and wished he'd go away. He said, "Your name should be Spot."

They don't wash off. I've tried.

A man walked up and grabbed the boy's ear. "Don't you know who that is?" He pointed at me and said, "That's Doctor Beare's Daughter."

All the grown-ups in town know me.

The boy hung his head and said, "I . . . I didn't know. . . . Sorry, Miss Beare." Then he ran off. *Being Doctor Beare's Daughter is better than being just Janice.*

My House Had a Waiting Room

In the summers, we lived in our lake cottage, but the rest of the year, The Three Beares lived in our house-in-town—that big white house with a doctor's office on the corner of Main and Wayne Streets. Our front door was on Main. The office door was on Wayne. It was the old Heirholzer house that Daddy bought after the big war and divided into a house and office. The house was sorta surrounded by our church, Immaculate Conception (everyone calls it IC), the grade school, high school, and convent. Daddy liked living at his office. It was easy for him to get what he needed when he had to go on house calls. But Mommy wanted a new house away from the doctor's office. Right after the war there was a ban on building new, so Daddy promised

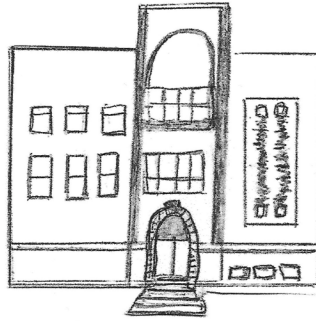
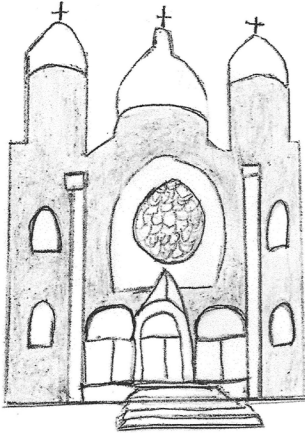


The house-in-town seen from Main Street

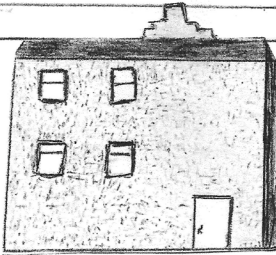


The office seen from Wayne Street

IC
CHURCH



GRADE
SCHOOL

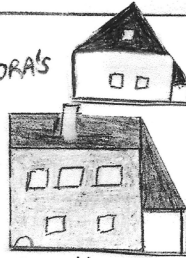


High School

ALLEY

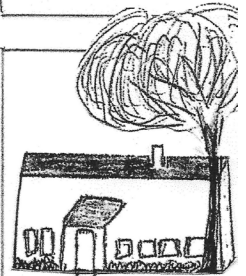
WALNUT

NORA'S



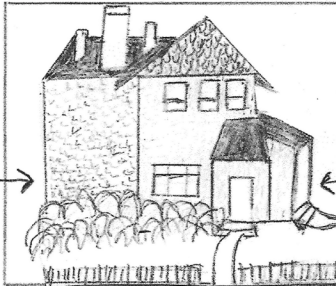
FURNITURE
STORE

WAYNE ST.



CONVENT

HOUSE-
IN-
TOWN



OFFICE

MAIN ST.

The house-in-town was sorta surrounded by Immaculate Conception Parish.
Map by Janice

her that one day he would build her dream house. I liked having the office right there because I could go in when it was closed and get tongue depressors, swabs, adhesive tape, and tiny paper cups to make things. I liked sitting in the waiting room and looking at the pictures in the *Highlights for Children* magazine. I even liked the smell, which was made of alcohol, rubber gloves, and floor wax.