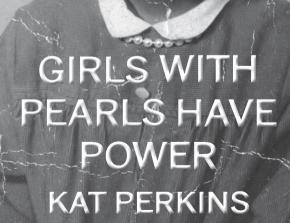
CULTIVATING HOPE, FUELING PERSEVERANCE, CELEBRATING RESILIENCE



Introduction Part One

I am Kat Perkins, transformational speaker, life strategist, ordained minister, artist, and poetic author extraordinaire. The poem that you are about to read is my life's memoir told in a poetic flow utilizing the precious gem, the pearl, as a symbol and metaphor. I wrote it as one long poem highlighting different times in my life. You can experience it as a poem of many, and as you savor its flavor you may find yourself totally immersed in the flow.

Come with me as we enter the enchanting realm of *Girls* with Pearls Have Power, where each pearl's illustrious beauty reflects the inner strength and confidence of those who wear them. The symbolism of pearls transcends mere adornment to embodying the essence of feminine power. Explore the intricate tapestry of femininity and the portrait

of hope, faith, perseverance, resilience, love, and empowerment woven through the timeless allure of pearls in this poetic journey of my life, where beauty and strength intertwine. This narrative illuminates not just my path but also that of girls and women around the world who face life's obstacles and yet embrace their unique capabilities.

It is my prayer that my symphony of words captivates you as I share my search for love, understanding, identity, and family through make-believe television characters in an effort to remedy the horrific experiences of parental loss, abuse, and lovelessness. These ills are combated by my overflowing faith, confidence, and indomitable spirit.

Step into a world with me where the elegance of pearls serves as a metaphor for the resilience of "She," and discover the radiant glow of empowerment that emanates

and leaps from each page of this poetic dialog as I embrace my inner strength with grace, confidence, and poise, just as my mother did with pearls adorning her neck during her short but meaningful time here on this Earth.

Introduction Part Two

I had to face the world head-on without a helmet. As a child, I received many blows; some were meant to knock me out and others meant to take me out, but in theory they only knocked me down. The thing is: I didn't stay down. With hope, I willed myself back up before the end of the count. Have you ever felt hopeless, so much so that the very idea of making it through seemed impossible, and no matter what you did nothing changed? Have you ever felt like the wind has been knocked out of your body?

I remember that as a little girl growing up with six brothers, they did a lot of punching on one another, and one day I found myself in the midst of their boyish ways.

I was in the crossfire of one very hard and quick punch, and it was a direct blow to my chest. The impact was so

intensely severe that I had difficulty catching my breath. It literally knocked the wind out of me. In a panic, I thought it was over as I found myself slowly going down to the floor in excruciating pain. This scared the boys just as much as it scared me, and yes, they had to answer to my daddy for their carelessness. But, back to my point, this is what life's circumstances can do to you. Can you relate to this? Have you ever felt like life has knocked the wind out of you, and in a panic you couldn't seem to catch your breath? Have you ever felt like bad things keep happening and they are only happening to you? Have you ever been harmed openly and insidiously by those who were charged to love and care for you?

Do not be discouraged, because you are not alone. I truly understand, my friends, that this struggle is real.

Believe me, I have been there too, and I know what is

like to not to have anyone there to fight for you. I'm sharing this with you because this isn't just my story, it's the story of everyone who has ever felt hopeless and held back by doubt, fear, or circumstance. It is my life's mission is to share the fact that life has endless possibilities with the world. I want you to know that the best of your life is not in your rear view mirror; it is just about to begin. So, flow with me on this poetic journey as it will awaken your inner spirit and reignite your passion, so much so that you will take off running to create the life that you deserve and to live a life that you absolutely adore.

Today, my friends, marks the first day of the best chapter of your life. Are you ready? Let's go

30th Street

I grew up in a world filled with abuse, lovelessness, and uncertainty, which created a profound void in my heart—one filled with confusion, hopelessness, anger, and resentment. At the age of nine I lost my mother to cancer; she was only thirty-five years old. So, for much of my life, I wandered through a nebulous fog that clouded my vision and my judgment, preventing me from seeing that a different world existed somewhere over the rainbow and that I was meant for more than my circumstances suggested.

You may not believe this, but I was born in the late fifties, and yes, I am still thirty-five and holding. Hailing from Indianapolis, Indiana, I grew up on the east side of town, proudly identifying as a "30th Street girl." It was a

badge of honor to say that's where you lived; not a rough side of town but a respected one. Although we lived on the low income spectrum, my childhood was filled with wonder; I never perceived myself as living in poverty. Our rented home with its big backyard aligned the alley that separated our home on Martindale Street from Arsenal Avenue, where we would all play in the street as we walked home from school. Our two story, two bedroom home featured a walk-in closet that was used for a bedroom to accommodate my teenage brother, while the other five children bunked, or slept, in the same bed two at the top and one at the bottom. Our beloved home was directly across there street from the famous Mckinstry's Ice Cream Parlor, where we would buy a one scoop vanilla ice cream cone for five cents. Our home was the place to play because it resembled a

park, with monkey bars, an apple tree, and a grapevine.

Children were always around, laughing and full of joy.

I remember how quite often, this very friendly middle aged couple, Mr. and Mrs. Roney, would show up to our home and my mom would give them lots of money. As I grew older I realized that their visits, although friendly, had another purpose. They were there to collect the rent. This was an era where mothers and fathers were present in the household. Daddy went to work, came home, kissed my mother and all the children, and we gathered around the table for dinner together every day of the week, with a special dinner on Sunday. Yes this really existed in my home—until tragedy struck.

That tragedy ripped me from the arms of my tall, beautiful, classy mother with pearls adorning her neck. It took her away from me and my brothers. It not only

tore me from her embrace, but it also snatched my father away. No, he didn't die a physical death at that time, but he succumbed to a spiritual death. A death of loss from which he never recovered, even forty years later at his own physical death. This spiritual void trickled down to his 5 adolescent children, leaving us vulnerable to hurt, harm, and danger without a shield of protection.

I can still recall the short period of time that my mother endured her sickness. This tall beautiful woman a silhouette of a model with legs that would have made Tina Turner look twice. Alma Christine was her name, was born and raised in the deep roots of Arkansas. She was as tough as nails, a no nonsense woman yet, God fearing, elegant and graceful. She was the youngest of 6 to my share cropping grandparents. At age 12 she had to

work in the fields carrying a 20 ft sac as she picked cotton until her fingers bled. She was a woman who loved her family as she was a Sojourner Truth in her own right. She and her brother recused their older sister and her husband in the middle of the night from the slavish dangers of sharecropping in Mississippi. The story told by brother who witness the daring escape and rescue was only a child. This was warrior Alma, un-afraid, and always willing to fight for her family. She absolutely adored her children and I would like to think "especially me", because I was the only girl out of seven children but she loved each of us with a true mothers heart. It was hard to for me to imagine as a little girl how this strong, vibrate, beautiful being that I would look for each morning that I would awake calling her name "Mama where you at"? and her responsive voice

echoing from the air vents was music to my ears would always be "I'mmm in the kitchen", had become weak, and feeble still trying to maintain as a mother to seven children. There were two older boys who had reached adulthood. Pete, the eldest, had finished his required stay in the US Navy and had relocated to California, and the Michael was serving in the US Marine Corps. I remember that during this period, my mother was admitted to the Methodist hospital on Illinois street. While she suffering from cancer was in one hospital bed, my two-year-old baby brother, Mark Anthony, was in another as he was recovering from a surgery for appendicitis. As children under the age of twelve we were not allowed to visit the hospital, my Dad would go up to my mother's room, which was located on the third floor, and he would wave to us from her window. He

would park his car on the street so that we could look up to see his wave as he would blow a kiss to us from our mother as she laid bedridden, never to see her children again. To this day, when I visit my home town of Indianapolis, when I travel Illinois Street I always look up to that very third floor window where my mother took her last breath.

It was 1 o'clock in the morning, I am fast asleep on the couch at my aunts home when the loud screeching sound of the black telephone rang, My aunt jumps up from her bed and answers "hello" with a pause she says alright then". She placed the receiver back on the phone base and turns to me and blurts out " yo mama dead". Remember I am only 9 years old. "WTH" who says that to a child in that manner"? I am frozen as she gave me this gut wrenching news that would burn in my chest

like the strongest form of gin, straight with no chaser. I am trying to get words out of my mouth but nothing would come out. Finally, I exhaled and I asked what are you saying?, how do know?, who said that?, as she turns and walks away with no explanation to her words, leaving me in tears, anguish, and fear. I feel my heart beating fast as I sank into the fabric of the old couch. I was there alone my brothers and my dad were at home and I was somehow made to stay at my aunts home for the weekend, I don't recall, but this I remember. The next day my dad comes and he breaks down on my shoulder. I remember having to accompany him on a choppy trip to pick out a pink chiffon dress with house slipper that my mother would rest in forever. The funeral was sad, as I and my brothers were in totally disbelief. I look at my little brothers they were afraid, and confused. I can recall my older brother Acie Jr. crying so hard, asking me over and over, 'who is that laying here it doesn't look like mama"? That ain't mama! My 9 year old self was messed up, I couldn't breath, nor I couldn't cry. I was too afraid, as death had fearfully mesmerized me. I'm telling him, stop crying, stop crying its not going to bring her back". This held true for all of us for the rest of our lives. Just like that, my mother and every physical aspect of her being was no more, she was gone. She had taken flight joining the angels of my ancestor in heaven and the seven of us would have to adapt to a whole new way of life "motherless".

For me it all started on a typical day at noon as my brothers and I were walking from school to my aunt's house for lunch. There was not a school bus for us to ride, so we had to walk through any weather; rain, hail,

sleet, or snow. This walk didn't allow us much time to enjoy a lunch, but in those days we were not afforded a nice hot school lunch of peas, mashed potatoes, and chicken and sometimes, pizza, a hotdog, or a hamburger that smelled so delicious as we walked pass to go out of the door. The kids that received a hot lunch even got to drink chocolate milk. Now how cool was that? You had to be damn near rich to afford chocolate milk. You have no idea how much I wanted a hot school lunch!

My aunt lived two blocks away from the school and she was home most days, therefore allowing all five of us to stop in for a sandwich of mayonnaise, syrup, or butter and sugar if there was no bologna to dress the bread, and if we were lucky, on that day we may end up with a piece of cheese. I wasn't a fan of the butter and sugar or the syrup sandwich,

so it was the mayonnaise for me. And not just any mayonnaise; it was Miracle Whip. "A sandwich just isn't a sandwich without the tangy taste of Miracle Whip."

Remember this commercial? Some habits just won't die I still swear by Miracle Whip.

On this bright sunny day, as we raced down the street to be the first to reach the door, as we turned to approach the corner we could see from a block away the brown government car parked in front of my aunt's home. I was oblivious to what was happening because I had never seen the car before, but my two older brothers had not only seen this car, but they also had the privilege of riding in it.

This was not their first rodeo. In a panic, they both screamed, "It's them again! Run!"

And ran we did. In the Black community, when one senses danger and screams "run!!!," everyone runs and ask questions later. In fact you don't even have to hear the words; when you see the flee, you just follow suit. It's funny but oh so true.

We ran as fast as we could and scattered like ants, but we could not outrun the brown car nor the professionally-dressed personnel. You would have thought that they were Olympic track stars. My brothers and I were gathered and herded like wild horses as we tried escape the Indiana Welfare System. Can you image? Five scared children captured and tossed in the back seat of an

unknown brown vehicle. Myself and my two younger brothers, aged three and five, were whisked away from our family and friends that we had come to know and love. We were the 'Robinson Diaspora.' My two older brothers were left behind at my aunt's home, while I and two younger brothers were hidden and tucked away on another side of town far from our beloved and respected 30th Street. We were shown no mercy. We were shown absolutely no respect. Didn't these people know that we were from 30th Street? I guess they did not get the memo, but then again they must have known, someone must have said something, as they knew too much. There was a snitch in our midst. They knew about my dad's Friday and Saturday night gambling ring, where it

appeared to be fifty or more men surrounding my mother's beautiful dining room table, packing pistols as they leaned forward rolling the black and white dice, uttering the words, "A quarter I fade, baby need a new pair of shoes," as my brothers and I sat at the top of the stairs peeping through the rails.

Can you picture the danger that we were in? I was a little girl, and my brothers . . . what kind of example was this for any of them? None I tell you, absolutely none, and that became obvious as my brothers grew into manhood.

After the wild ride, no one knew where we were—not even me. I found myself lost in a strange land just fifteen minutes from our actual home. At only ten years old, I hadn't studied geography and therefore

I had no recollection of my parents ever taking me to that area of town. It was a harrowing experience. (Side note: this is the very reason why, when I became a mother, the first thing I taught my daughter was her address and her phone number, and I advise you to do the same. I made sure I taught all three of my children street signs and directions to where they lived. I never ever wanted them to feel lost or to be lost. So, I ask you now: what was the first thing that you taught your child? In this day and time in the world that we live in, people steal children, and they have expanded their fleet. They now have vans with no windows, so make sure that your children know their basis information. This is urgent!)

Back to the story. My brothers and I were placed in foster care, where physical and mental abuse reared its ugly head, tormenting me as I tried to protect the three of us. This was the beginning of my yellow brick road; a search for understanding, love, and acceptance. In this poetic genre, I will share with you my journey through love, loss, hurt, and disappointment. I will share with you how these experiences have strengthen me; how they have molded me into the woman that I am today. These experiences, as gruesome as they were, did not take me out as intended. You will see that I have cultivated my hope, which has fueled my perseverance, and through that perseverance, I celebrate resilience with a clean heart.

Let me tell you something: breaking free is not impossible, it is entirely plausible. I am living proof that you can rise above your circumstances and surpass them, transforming your life in ways you may not have imagine, because *Girls with Pearls Have Power*!