

A CHILD IS BORN

IT WAS FREEZING cold outside. The night was black and three children, Howard, Effa, and Ray were snuggled together under the homemade quilts trying to keep warm. Howard, the oldest, tried to reassure the two younger ones that everything was going to be fine. But was it?

They could hear the mumbling of soft voices in the next room. Occasionally they would also hear their mother cry out in pain. They all knew that a baby would be added to their family that very night.

Howard could remember when the last baby had been born three years earlier, in 1926. John Robert, a baby boy had been still-born. He never cried, never even took a breath, and was later buried in a small grave in the Jobe Family Cemetery. Would the children hear a baby's cry tonight or

would they only hear silence and the soft sobbing of their heart-broken mother?

The small children didn't realize that John's was not the only small grave that their mother visited. Her first baby was born July 12, 1913 and was named Hazel. The new mother had doted on the small bundle of joy from the very beginning. Sadly, however on April 29, of the very next year, Hazel died; (the official cause was listed as Spinal Meningitis)

Oscar and Rebecca Diamond, Becky as she was known to most, were good parents. Times were hard and there was never enough money. They worked side by side in the garden all summer to put up vegetables for the winter months. This year, though, when canning time came around, Becky had not been feeling well. The baby she was carrying seemed to sap her strength more as each day passed.

Howard tried to lay as still as possible so that he wouldn't awaken Effa or Ray. They had finally exhausted themselves with whispered questions that Howard couldn't answer and had fallen asleep. He strained his ears to hear what was happening. It had become terribly quiet.

Was their mother ok? The silence was alarming to him and just as he was about to climb out of the warmth of his bed to investigate, he heard the loud lusty wail of a newborn baby.

The eyes of the younger children popped open, sleep forgotten, and they all wondered if they had a baby brother or a baby sister. Finally their dad came to the doorway to whisper, as if afraid to wake those who might still be sleeping, "Kids, you have a baby sister. Do ya'll want to come see?"

There was no need for further encouragement as the three ran barefoot across the icy cold floor to their parent's room.

Howard held back just a bit, still worried about whether or not this baby would be part of the family when the sun rose the next morning. The loud, angry crying should have assured him that this little girl already had a mind and a will of her own.

She would be a survivor. She would be amazing. She would be Grace Clatina* Diamond. The little baby girl had a head full of curly black hair and big dark eyes. Oscar later told everybody and anybody who would listen that he and Becky had the prettiest damn baby in Fallsburg and even in the entire Lawrence County.

As Grace grew, her older sister Effa, was often saddled with making sure that Grace ate all of her lunch. Only after the bowl of milk and cornbread was empty could Effa go outside to play. There was an easy solution to this, though. When Becky wasn't looking, Effa would gobble up the lunch, declare that Grace ate all of her milk and bread and head out the door before another chore could be assigned.

Becky had no idea that her youngest was extra hungry a lot of the time. It was a story, however, that the sisters would laugh about often once they were grown with families of their own.