

# *The Princess Within*

— FOR TEENS —

DISCOVERING YOUR ROYAL INHERITANCE

SERITA ANN  
JAKES



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# *Letters From My Daughters*

Hey, Little Princess,

There is a woman inside of every girl, and a girl inside every woman. As you grow into what God has for you, it can be difficult to know how to really find who you are. This book is going to help you reach the person God plans for you to be.

Communication with your mother is essential in getting you to the place God has for you. When I was a little girl, my mom would give us little purses, and she would say, “Walk like Mommy.” My sister and I would get behind her and mimic walking like her. She had such a soft voice, and we would mimic that too. I can remember seeing what my mommy wore and loving it, and asking her, “Do they have that in little-girl size?” My whole life, even still now, I have watched my mom and tried to emulate the class that she carried.

When you are a teenager, learning new things about your body and discovering who you are, there is no manual to teach you how to find the princess within. There is no manual to show you how to become a lady. My mother has always had a

heart for little women, and I am thrilled that she has taken her heart and placed it in words for you. She has given you the opportunity—and the manual—to find the princess within you.

In life, you will go through things, but it is important for you to know that your purpose and destiny are resting on the inside of you. This book is going to help you pull out that destiny and purpose.

My mother used to sit my sister and me down and talk about how to take care of ourselves and our bodies and to just love ourselves as the princesses we truly are. This book is just that: She is sitting down and sharing her heart with you, just as she did with my sister and me.

There is so much waiting on the inside of you and developing on the inside of you. You are stronger than you know and brighter than you know. This book is simply going to share with you how to tap into that. I believe after so many years we have waited for a manual to tap into the lady God has chosen us to be even at a young age, and this is your manual. I am so happy that you finally have a key, and even more excited to see you step into your destiny. Wishing you the best as you learn how to be all that you can be, and as you truly discover the princess within.

Your Big Sister,  
Cora Coleman

Dear Little Sister,

When I was your age, I was so unsure of who I was. I wanted so badly to be understood by others, or at least by myself. Why did I feel the way I did? I remember hearing people tell me often that I was special. They had no idea I felt anything but special! My differences made me insecure until it made me desperate for attention. I wanted to hide behind the concept of normal, where no one else would see my truth. Now, a bit older, I want to share a tip with you before you read this book:

*Open your heart.*

Don't read this looking for all the ways it doesn't apply to you because "you're different." For a moment just give in to the idea that someone may understand exactly how you feel. The truth is that throughout your life there will be moments when you question who you are. You will wonder why it's so easy for others to feel comfortable in their own skin while you struggle. Those moments don't go away easily. For many of our sisters, those thoughts convinced them to settle for less than God's best. I have been there.

I learned a valuable lesson in those times.

It may not always be easy to fully love yourself in the face of many uncertainties, but it is rewarding. I feel as though it's the secret polish that allows our crowns to fully shine. When we begin to love the smallest details from our crooked smiles to our secret tears, the fullness of God's light can shine upon us. Believe me, I know, it's much easier said than done. That's why your heart must be open to this change. Grace insists we quiet our self-doubt and give voice to God in us. Fear cannot reside where love abides. Allow the sincerity of words in this book to echo into the depths of your heart.

I can't imagine a woman more fitting to shed light on discovering the royalty that exists in us all than my mother. She is

consistently honest and courageously gentle as she empowers us to show love in the face of pain. Countless times I've witnessed her choosing love in the face of fear. The seeds God has given her to plant restoration, hope, and determination in women have a harvest well into the millions. My sister and I, however, had the honor of being in her heart's garden. We have been witnesses to many seasons in her life—some of sadness and many of joy. Yet I've never seen her cave into the pressure to abandon who she is. I used to wonder whether she was birthed with such incredible resilience or learned to be loyal to her truth through heartache.

Then I realized that what was more important than how she learned it was who her teacher was. She learned from the ultimate Master. It humbles me that He thought enough of me to allow me to dwell in her heart as well. This book, another labor of love, will produce seeds in your life for many years to come.

Open your heart, princess. It's time to shine!

Sarah Jakes

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## CHAPTER 1

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# *Princess, Why Are You Hiding?*

*Life is like a fairy tale. . . .*

Ella kept a to-do list on her phone a mile long. School. Homework. Chores. After school job. She had forgotten what it was like to live differently. But keeping busy was the best way to forget about what happened. If only she could forget how Josh had made a fool of her, then posted the results all over Facebook.

Her friends texted constantly. *Where r u? Come b w/ us.* They were trying at least. But hang out? In public? And be humiliated? No thank you! Even thinking about what had happened was painful.

### PLAYLIST

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"Optimistic" performed by Sounds of Blackness (written by Gary Hines, Jimmy Jam, and Terry Lewis)

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"Perfect People" performed by The Walls Group (written by Kirk Franklin)

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## **Tempted to hide?**

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Ella. She was just like you—she went to school and had friends and a family. But some of her problems had to do with family and friends. Her home life wasn't great. I'll tell you more about that in the chapters ahead. And a friend hurt her deeply. So she tried to hide away from everyone by keeping herself busy.

Does that tactic sound familiar? Let's talk about the secrets that cause people to hide.

Social media make us all mini-celebrities, thanks to photos splashed across the computer screen, shared videos, and status updates available for all of our friends to see.

Many people crave the fifteen minutes of fame that Andy Warhol, an internationally famous painter, claimed that everyone would one day have. But the downside of being a celebrity is the fact that mistakes are often put on public display. Photos are taken and videos are made and watched over and over with comments enabled for the public to weigh in. After all, who hasn't seen videos of "wardrobe mishaps" or celebrity mug shots after run-ins with the law?

But let's talk about the average teen. Many are tempted to hide when others post negative messages about them on Facebook and other social media, or a boyfriend changes his status from "in a relationship" to "single"—the way to break up with someone. Suddenly, the Facebook timeline becomes a wall of shame that others can access.

Some teens might be tempted to hide because they've allowed a boyfriend to take compromising pictures (or they took the pictures themselves), which he then sent to his friends or shared with others through Instagram or Snapchat. Or perhaps damaging lies were tweeted and repeated or sexting messages



they thought were private were leaked all over school. Has that ever happened to you or to someone you know?

Shameful secrets make us afraid to show our faces in public. We withdraw in fear that someone will bring our experience to the knowledge of others. Intimidation is a dark and dreary place in which to live. Even when light penetrates our room, we look for dark corners to retreat to so we can keep our secrets from exposure.

The sad thing is that hiding becomes almost impossible the more you live your life through social media. An article at *VanityFair.com*, “Friends Without Benefits,” written by Nancy Jo Sales, included this snippet of a conversation:

“Social media is destroying our lives,” said the girl at the Grove.

“So why don’t you go off it?” I asked.

“Because then we would have no life,” said her friend.<sup>1</sup>

Would you agree?

### **A trusted secret keeper**

Hiding feels comfortable at the time, but it is a lonely lifestyle to maintain. If secrets are allowed to run the course of their destruction, finding new ways to keep these secrets can become more sacred than our search for freedom from them. There is hope, however, for people who find a trustworthy friend to whom they can tell their secrets. Many people have found healing by revealing their secrets to a person who can demonstrate forgiveness to them. Secrets lose their power if there is no longer a reason to hide their truths. The right secret keeper can make the person feel acceptable again.

This need for the acceptance of others drives us to great measures, because we tend to agree with the opinions that others

have of us. If our peers want to imitate us, we are flattered. If they make fun of us, we are defeated. That's why we must be careful who we choose to be our secret keeper. If we tell our secret to the wrong person, he or she might use it against us and inflict more shame on us than we previously carried. But it is also true that if we share a secret with someone who accepts us for the new person in Christ that we are becoming, we find liberation from our guilt and enjoy new beginnings.

### **The secret ingredient is love**

Do your friends tell you their secrets? I guard the secrets of those who confide in me. It is my way of showing them that I accept them as they are. My belief in them helps to relieve their sense of shame as they accept my love in spite of what has happened to them or what they have done. I am not so much concerned about the choices they made in their past but in the choices they will make in the future.

I learned this art of secret keeping from God, who has been faithful to keep my secrets—secrets that kept me from enjoying the new life He gave to me. He accepts me, so I can accept others.

Think of the last secret you had. Maybe it was something you didn't want anyone to know about you. Now think about how you felt. Alone? Afraid? Ashamed? Secrets rob us of the freedom and joy we can have in life. They rob us *of* life. Think about the people you know who seem like they're carrying a great load. They're probably quieter than they usually are. Maybe you don't see them as often. They don't act the way they usually act.

Some people pretend they're not in pain, preferring to hide behind a fake smile. I've kept a smile pasted on my face even

when I've been in pain. I was afraid of my future because of my past. But I found a secret weapon.

### **My secret weapon**

I met my Lord, my Secret Keeper. Once I gave to Him the secrets that kept me from being totally His, I found that those same secrets were now totally His to keep. He removed the shame that I felt and covered me with His truth and love again. Thanks to His love, I have nothing to hide.

I have found healing by writing letters to the Lord, my Secret Keeper. Have you ever felt really, really peaceful? The act of explaining my fears and waiting for God to answer gave me peace. Writing to Him caused me to be still and to listen to Him.

When I was a teen, I wanted to hide because of the shame I felt. You see, I had this boyfriend who rejected me. His actions toward me made me feel unlovely and unwanted.

It took a while, but I had to get real before God and admit my secret pain to Him. I wrote,

*Dear Secret Keeper,*

*It was right after my brother died. No, let me correct that statement. It was right after my brother was murdered. My whole world seemed to come to a screeching halt. How could his life be ended so abruptly, just when he was trying to get it all together? He had given his life to You. For the first time in his life, my brother seemed to have found true happiness—the kind of happiness that I knew (even then) only came from having You as the center of his life.*

*One evening he went out with his daughters to one of the local hangouts. The girls were raising money for a trip to an amusement park, and their daddy was taking them*

*where all of his friends would be. Everybody liked my brother, I thought. But something went wrong. There was an argument. Then there were gunshots, and my brother tumbled to the bottom of the stairs.*

*Oh, Secret Keeper, I was looking for someone who enjoyed having fun like my brother. I thought I found someone like that. My boyfriend liked to have fun, but sometimes he seemed so angry. I began to notice bouts of anger that soon became hostility toward me. The hostility turned into verbal outbursts that I could not believe my ears were hearing. As suddenly as it happened, he would return to being the person I had grown so fond of.*

*He visited every day. I even recognized the sound of his car when he drove up. But the visits became shorter; there was always something else he had to do. As the visits grew briefer, the atmosphere became more intense and often resulted in senseless arguments. I felt like something wasn't right. I could almost sense danger every time he came.*

*In my heart, I felt warned that the relationship was taking a turn for the worse. The accusations turned into rage. The rage turned into threats of violence. What game was this we played?*

My Secret Keeper helped me with His Word: Psalm 121:1–8. I looked up the Scripture and read it to myself as though the Lord were speaking it directly to me:

*Dear Serita Ann,*

*You will lift up your eyes to the hills—where does your help come from? Your help comes from me, the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

*I will not let your foot slip—I who watch over you will not slumber; indeed, I who watch over Israel will neither*

*slumber nor sleep. I, the Lord, watch over you—I am your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.*

*I, the Lord, will keep you from all harm—I will watch over your life; I, the Lord, will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*

I returned to my writing and finished telling my Lord the secret that had haunted me.

*I don't know why I didn't heed the warning that You gave to me. I knew that things were about to come to a boil. Whenever I heard his car, I became nervous. It had been nearly a week. There had been neither phone calls nor visits. If history was to be repeated, I knew that when he did return he would be very hateful.*

The day my boyfriend returned was an awful day. He made me feel ashamed for being me. I relived the day in my letter to my Secret Keeper:

*It sounds like the car has stopped. Why is he walking so fast? Oh please, no arguing again. "But I haven't been anywhere!" I remember saying.*

*It hurts when he shoves like this.*

*Why is he pushing me?*

*Is that a gun in his hand?*

*What is he doing?*

*I've never seen such a face; it's like looking at the devil himself. Is he going to kill me, Secret Keeper? He's got his gun to my head, and I'm lying on the floor. God, help me!*

But God spared my life:

*I looked up and he was gone. I crawled to the window and peeked under the shade. He stood there beneath the full moon, cocked the gun, and fired it into the air five times. I sat on the floor trembling; tears would not come. Everything that I thought he was had turned to lies. When I met him, I felt so lonely. When he drove off, again I felt left alone.*

*But then I realized that I had not been left alone. I had called out to You, and You had sent an angel to rescue me from death! I'm never alone because I always have You, Secret Keeper.*

*Love,  
Serita Ann*

Because of the way he treated me, I thought I deserved to be treated disrespectfully. He had stripped me of my sense of self-worth and had robbed me of my dignity. But now, after laying my secret before the Lord, after wrestling with the truth that God was there protecting me and saving me from further harm, I no longer felt ashamed.

Why do we keep our secrets to ourselves instead of giving them to God, our Secret Keeper and trusted friend? With Jesus we can come out of hiding.

## WHAT'S *your* STORY?

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Writing out your feelings will help you to see what God already knows about you. So why not write a letter to the Lord, your Secret Keeper, in your journal? Each time you write, tell Him what secret makes you want to hide.

To get you started, read the passage below. From what troubles do you want God to save you?

This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

Psalm 34:6–7

Ask God what He thinks about your secret. Then listen to His still, small voice within your heart and record His response in your journal or below.