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“Bless those
who persecute you;
bless and do not
curse.”

The Devil in Pew Number Seven

A TRUE STORY



Rebecca
Nichols
Alonzo

with Bob DeMoss

“What if someone were to do something unimaginably horrific to you or your family? *The Devil in Pew Number Seven* is a riveting true story of one woman’s journey of forgiveness, the depths of which most of us will never experience. Ultimately, Becky’s harrowing account serves as an inspiration to us all, especially to those who are struggling with forgiveness in their own lives.”

DR. TIM LAHAYE

President, Tim LaHaye Ministries; coauthor, Left Behind series

“As little girls, we’re all scared of something. For five-year-old Becky, it was a bomb-setting madman in her daddy’s church—with her family as the target. Against the odds she survived and has had to learn that ‘forgiveness is the language of heaven.’ This is must reading for anyone struggling to forgive.”

SHELLEY BREEN

Point of Grace

“As Christians we often pray, ‘Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.’ It’s a lot easier to ask God for forgiveness for our own failings than it is to extend forgiveness to those who have wronged us. Becky’s story shows us that, with the Lord’s grace, forgiveness and healing are possible, even in the most horrific of situations.”

JAMES D. DALY

President and CEO, Focus on the Family

“Becky has reached a level of forgiveness where few will ever have to go. In going there herself, she leads us on a path of freedom that is both riveting and revolutionary. We loved every page.”

RON AND LYNETTE LEWIS

*King’s Park International Church, Durham, North Carolina
Morning Star New York, New York City*

“Without a doubt, this is one of the best books I have ever read. I believe Becky’s story will be greatly used of our Lord to change the lives of countless numbers of people.”

SHERRILL BABB, PH.D.

Chancellor, Philadelphia Biblical University

“Becky relives the ‘shop of horrors’ in which she grew up, as her pastor dad and family were the target of vicious attacks. You will be dumbfounded and heartbroken over the extent to which evil can be perpetrated by bitter hearts. You will be vexed by the apparent triumph of injustice and perplexed by the seeming inactivity of God at times. And you will marvel at the grace of God to enable His children to forgive their enemies, overcome evil with good, and hold fast to hope that a day is coming when He will right all wrongs and vindicate His own.”

NANCY LEIGH DEMOSS

Author, Revive Our Hearts radio host

“Forgiveness seems so unnatural. For the offended to be able to remove the debt of the offender can only be a ‘God thing.’ *The Devil in Pew Number Seven* proves that point very well.”

H. B. LONDON, JR.

Vice President, Church and Clergy, Focus on the Family

“At the heart of solving most of our relational conflicts is one all-important word—*forgiveness*. Becky’s remarkable story will unlock multitudes from their past and propel them into a life of freedom, success, and peace. I highly recommend this book.”

LARRY TOMCZAK

Author and Speaker

“Get ready to be captivated and inspired by Becky’s testimony. We simply could not put the book down.”

SAM AND KATHI KATINA

The Katinas

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who persecute you;
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To Mom and Dad for being servant-leaders, for showing God's endless love to the unlovable. Thank you for writing your memoirs so this book could be written. Our journey together continues through the years.

To my brother, Daniel; you were not only an answer to Mom and Dad's prayers but mine as well. Without you, I would have been a lonely only child.

To Aunt Dot, my constant guide and number one fan. I'm grateful for your love and wisdom. Your devotion to our family knows no bounds.

To Kenny, my husband and best friend. Thank you for all of the years of love and devotion, for being a man of integrity, and for holding my hand through the smiles and tears. You continue to amaze me.

For Kolby, my valiant warrior; your mighty heart toward the Lord and love for justice bless my life.

For Katelin, my delicate rose; the love of God is a sweet-smelling fragrance from your tender heart and is precious to me.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Let me be clear about one thing.

The story you're about to read actually happened, every last detail of it. As the plot unfolds, my hunch is that you'll need to remind yourself of this reality more than once. If you've ever required evidence to prove the adage "Truth is stranger than fiction," look no further. To be redundant, this *is* a true story.

In a way, I wish it were not. And at times I'm glad it's true.

Some of what transpired occurred before I was born, which, for obvious reasons, means I have no firsthand knowledge of those events. Likewise, there was a time when I was too young to comprehend the events swirling around me. However, my parents wisely kept thorough personal journals, thick family photo albums, stacks of newspaper clippings, an 8 mm film reel, and a priceless cassette tape narrated by my father. (Some of those photos appear on the opening pages of the chapters in this book. A list of captions is included on page 272.)

As if these items were not proof enough that this story actually occurred, as I wrote, I had at my disposal my memories, a federal court transcript, and crime scene reports and photographs. I also conducted numerous interviews with those witnesses who are still alive today. These invaluable resources provided a trustworthy road map through the minefield that was—and is—my life.

I don't share the following pages because I am looking for sympathy. Far from it. Rather, I invite you to travel with me to the very end where we discover perhaps the most disturbing part of the story: you and I have no choice but to forgive others . . . even if they are the monsters next door.

After all, forgiveness is the language of heaven.

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CHAPTER 1

Walking, Crawling, Dead or Alive

I ran.

My bare feet pounding the pavement were burning from the sun-baked asphalt. Each contact between flesh and blacktop provoked bursts of pain as if I were stepping on broken glass. The deserted country road, stretching into the horizon, felt as if it were conspiring against me. No matter how hard I pushed myself, the safe place I was desperate to reach eluded me.

Still, I ran.

Had a thousand angry hornets been in pursuit, I couldn't have run any faster. Daddy's instructions had been simple: I had to be a big girl, run down the street as fast as my legs could carry me, and get help. There was nothing complicated about his request. Except for the fact that I'd have to abandon my hiding place under the kitchen table and risk being seen by the armed madman who had barricaded himself

with two hostages in my bedroom down the hall. I knew, however, that ignoring Daddy's plea was out of the question.

And so I ran.

Even though Daddy struggled to appear brave, the anguish in his eyes spoke volumes. Splotches of blood stained his shirt just below his right shoulder. The inky redness was as real as the fear gnawing at the edges of my heart. I wanted to be a big girl for the sake of my daddy. I really did. But the fear and chaos now clouding the air squeezed my lungs until my breathing burned within my chest.

My best intentions to get help were neutralized, at least at first. I remained hunkered down, unable to move, surrounded by the wooden legs of six kitchen chairs. I had no illusions that a flimsy 6 x 4 foot table would keep me safe, yet I was reluctant to leave what little protection it afforded me.

In that space of indecision, I wondered how I might open the storm door without drawing attention to myself. One squeak from those crusty hinges was sure to announce my departure plans. Closing the door without a bang against the frame was equally important. The stealth of a burglar was needed, only I wasn't the bad guy.

Making no more sound than a leaf falling from a tree, I inched my way out from under the table. I stood and then scanned the room, left to right. I felt watched, although I had no way of knowing for sure whether or not hostile eyes were studying my movements. I inhaled the distinct yet unfamiliar smell of sulfur lingering in the air, a calling card left behind from the repeated blasts of a gun.

I willed myself to move.

My bare feet padded across the linoleum floor.

I was our family's lifeline, our only connection to the outside world. While I hadn't asked to be put in that position, I knew Daddy was depending on me. More than that, Daddy *needed* me to be strong.

To act. To do what he was powerless to do. I could see that my daddy, a strong ex-Navy man, was incapable of the simplest movement. The man whom I loved more than life itself, whose massive arms daily swept me off my feet while swallowing me with an unmatched tenderness, couldn't raise an arm to shoo a fly.

To see him so helpless frightened me.

Yes, Daddy was depending on *me*.

Conflicted at the sight of such vulnerability, I didn't want to look at my daddy. Yet my love for him galvanized my resolve. I reached for the storm-door handle. Slow and steady, as if disarming a bomb, and allowing myself quick glances backward to monitor the threat level of a sudden ambush, I opened the storm door and stepped outside. With equal care, I nestled the metal door against its frame.

I had to run.

I shot out from under the carport, down the driveway, and turned right where concrete and asphalt met. The unthinkable events of the last five minutes replayed themselves like an endless-loop video in my mind. My eyes stung, painted with hot tears at the memory. Regardless of their age, no one should have to witness what I had just experienced in that house—let alone a seven-year-old girl. The fresh images of what had transpired moments ago mocked me with the fact that my worst fears had just come true.

I had to keep running.

Although I couldn't see any activity through the curtains framing my bedroom window, that didn't mean the gunman wasn't keeping a sharp eye on the street. I hesitated, but only for a moment more. What *might* happen gave way to what *had* happened. I had to get help. Now, almost frantic to reach my destination, I redoubled my efforts.

I ran on.

To get help for Momma and Daddy. To escape the gunman. To

get away from all the threatening letters, the sniper gunshots, the menacing midnight phone calls, the home invasions—and the devil who seemed to be behind so many of them.

But I'm getting ahead of the story.