

TULSA TIMES

Merrill J. Davies

Other Novels by Merrill J. Davies

The Best Version of Alice (2022)

Becoming Jestina (2018)

Our Pebble in the Pond (2016)

The Truth about Katie (2013)

The Welsh Harp (2012)

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Published in the United States by Nurturing Faith Inc., Macon GA,
www.nurturingfaith.net.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

ISBN: 978-1-63528-228-3

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DEDICATION

This novel is dedicated to my father, John S. Johnson (1907–1994). By most standards, he would not have been considered a successful man, but to me he was a hero. With very little education, he managed to provide our family with a comfortable home. He was a hard worker and always told my sister and me that if we got a good education, we could do whatever we wanted to do. He was the most generous man I have ever known, and he loved children. Although this is a work of fiction, I think it stays true to my dad's character and personality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many people that I appreciate for helping me put this story together. I can't actually list them all, but I want to list a few. First of all, my husband Bill and my good friends Martha Heneisen and Sharon McBrayer have been faithful readers for all my novels, and I appreciate them more than they will ever know. For *Tulsa Times*, I really appreciate the help the Tulsa Historical Society gave me in my research before and during my visit to Tulsa. The Tulsa Research Library also went above and beyond my expectations when I spent the day doing research there. I also appreciate my friend Lawrence Baines, who took time to read the novel and write an endorsement.

CHAPTER 1

APRIL 1929—DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

Naomi's hands shook as she put the key in the lock on her brother Jonny's apartment door. She almost dropped the key, and her reddish-blond hair fell down around her face. She half expected him to be in the apartment when she entered, but when she pushed the door open, all was quiet.

As Naomi went from one tiny room to the other, she found no sign of Jonny—or Marilyn, for that matter—in the kitchen or living room. The apartment was similar to the one where she and her husband Harris lived, except a little older. It was in the same area, but not owned by the same people, and it faced in the other direction from theirs. The white wooden buildings all looked alike. Most of the occupants were employees of Ford Motor Company. When she and Harris had moved there, Naomi was excited that their apartment was close to Jonny's.

She clinched an envelope with the landlady's name and "Apt. #110" printed on the front, and a note that read "Take this key and this money to the landlady." It did not look like Jonny's handwriting, but it was hard to tell. She wondered why her brother had not given the key to the landlady himself. Had he been kidnapped? Probably not. A kidnapper would not have left money for the next month's rent. Why had he and Marilyn left? Was Marilyn even gone? If so, where was her key? Naomi remembered what she'd observed the night Harris had been late coming home. Could Jonny's leaving have anything to do with that?

Although Naomi was only a year and a half younger than Jonny, he seemed much older. She would never have agreed to come to Michigan if her brother had not been working here.

As she walked hurriedly through the apartment, Naomi wondered why she'd even come in. She just had this desire to see inside the apartment, since she assumed her brother must have either left or been taken away. What if he'd been murdered? On the bed she found a blue dress shirt with a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes in the pocket. A pair of men's black dress shoes sat on the floor beside the bed. Naomi picked up the shirt and shoes and looked over her shoulder, feeling like an intruder or a thief. She stood there a moment and then put the items back where she'd found them. She wouldn't take anything. She was probably overreacting, she thought. Jonny would return in a few days and look for them.

When Naomi was about halfway down the narrow stairs to the first floor, she saw #110 on a door below. Approaching the door, she looked at the envelope,