



## COVENANT CHILD

By Terri Blackstock

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### Chapter One

There's a question that haunts me in the blackest hours of night, when wasted moments crowd my dreams and mock the life I know<sup>1</sup>. The question is this: How could a child born of privilege and promise grow up with nothing?

I was Somebody when I was born. Lizzie, my twin, says we were heiresses all along.

“Our grandfather was a billionaire,” she says. “Just *think* of it, Kara!” There were newspaper articles about us when we were three. They called us the “Billion Dollar Babies.”

But these Billion Dollar Babies wore Good Will hand-me-downs. We ate dry cereal most nights for supper, right out of the box, picking out the raisins to save for our school lunches the next day. In my memory, we never observed a birthday, because no one around us considered that day worthy of celebration. We were worthless no accounts to most of the people in town.

But all along we had an inheritance that no one told us was ours.

I sometimes try to remember back to the days before we were three, but my memories are tainted with the lies I've been taught and the pictures I've seen. I can't quite sift out real recollections from my faulty assumptions, but I do know that the things I've laid out here are true. Not because I remember them, but because I've studied all the sides, heard all the tales, read all the reports...and a few things have emerged with absolute clarity.

The first thing is that my father, Jack Holbrooke, was the son of *the* Paul Holbrooke, who did something with microchips and processors, things I can't begin to understand, and amassed a

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<sup>1</sup> Excellent beginning. Very emotive, captivating. Definitely makes me want to know what's going on.

<sup>2</sup> Very nice.

fortune before he was thirty. My father, Jack, got religion in his teens and decided he didn't want to play the part of the rich son. He became a pilot instead, bought a plane, and began flying charter flights and giving lessons. He disowned himself from the Holbrooke money and told his

father that, instead of leaving any of it to him in his will, he preferred that he donate it to several evangelical organizations who provided relief and shared the gospel to people all over the world.

My grandfather tolerated his zeal and noted his requests, then promptly ignored them.

My mother, Sherry, was a teen runaway, who left Barton, Mississippi at fifteen to strike out on her own. She wound up living with a kind family in Jackson, and she got religion, too.

She met my father in Jackson, when he put an ad in the paper for some office help at his hangar, and they fell in love around the time she was nineteen or so. They got married and had Lizzie and me less than a year later.

She was killed in a car wreck when we were just weeks old.

Our father raised us himself for the next three years. I've seen pictures of him, and he looks like a kind, gentle man who laughed a lot. There are snapshots of him kissing us, dunking us like basketballs in his father's pool, chasing us across the lawn of the little house we lived in, reading us books, tucking us in. There are three birthday photos of our father lying on the floor with two cake-smearing redheads tearing into boxes of Barbies and Cabbage Patch Dolls.

Sometimes I close my eyes and think hard, trying to bring back those moments, and for a while I convince myself that they are not just images frozen on paper, but they're live events in my head somewhere. I even think I can smell that cake and feel my father's stubbled face against mine. I can hear his laughter shaking through me and feel his arms holding me close.

But in truth, my memories don't reach that far back.

I don't even think I remember Amanda. Lizzie says she has more *impressions* of her than memories, that the snapshots just bring those impressions into clearer focus. I guess that's true with me, too.

But I wish I could remember when she met our father and us, how she wound up being his wife, how she was widowed and robbed of her children, and how she spent her life trying to keep a promise she had made to him...and to us.

But, according to Lizzie, truth is truth, whether it lies in your memory banks or not.

So I'll start with Amanda's story, the way it was told to me, because it is very much the beginning of mine.

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