

# TRACIE PETERSON

PICTURES OF THE HEART

3

*Knowing You*

## Books by Tracie Peterson

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# *Knowing You*



TRACIE  
PETERSON



BETHANYHOUSE

a division of Baker Publishing Group  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Published by Bethany House Publishers  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

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ISBN 978-0-7642-3744-7 (paperback)

ISBN 978-0-7642-3745-4 (cloth)

ISBN 978-0-7642-3746-1 (large print)

ISBN 978-1-4934-4364-2 (ebook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Control Number: 2023018332

Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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23 24 25 26 27 28 29      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Prologue

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

MAY 1899

Leave her alone!”  
Thirteen-year-old May Parker hurried to get to her feet. She dusted off the skirt of her dress and scurried to stand behind Leander Munro.

“Why are you standing up for her, Lee? She’s Japanese.”

“She’s also my friend, and if you bother her again, I’ll knock your teeth out. All of you.”

May’s three attackers stood their ground. “There’s three of us, Lee, and just the two of you.”

“Bradley Anderson, I don’t care if there are six of you. I can hold my own and take you all on. You’ve seen me fight, and you know I can do it. Leave her alone, or I’ll make sure you never bother her again.”

“I don’t understand why you’d stand up for her. She’s not one of us.”

May peeked around Lee. “I’m half white.”

“Yeah, but you’re also half Japanese,” Bradley replied and spit on the ground. “You people were banned from Seattle, and I don’t know why you’re still here.”

“You’re talking about the Chinese Exclusion Act. It wasn’t for the Japanese,” Lee countered. “Learn your history, Bradley, before you go spouting it off and prove just how ignorant you really are.”

“They’re all the same. The yellow menace. My father works with other businessmen to rid the city of the Japanese, as well as the Chinese. They’ve put some five hundred Japanese out of Seattle’s Southside. He’s very proud of that.”

“It’s hardly a thing to be proud of,” Lee replied.

“We don’t need their kind here. This is a white man’s world, and the only reason her parents were able to buy into this neighborhood is because her father is white,” Bradley said, and his companions nodded. “But she isn’t, and neither is her mother. They need to go back to where they come from.”

“I was born in America!” May exclaimed. “Right here in Seattle. I am where I come from.”

“Doesn’t matter. You belong in Japan.”

“Bradley, you’d do well to take your friends and go home. If I hear that you so much as look at May with a frown, I’ll finish this once and for all.”

May so admired Lee’s strength and bravery. At fifteen, he was everything she thought a man should be. Just like her father.

Bradley seemed to consider Lee a moment, then shrugged. “Come on, fellas, let’s go to my house. Cook is fixing us a grand lunch with cherry pie for dessert.”

The other two went without protest, and May came out from behind Lee. She watched the boys move off down the street. Bradley lived only three doors down. His father was a wealthy investor who owned properties all over Seattle. Most of them commercial. Father said the man had more

money than he knew what to do with, yet he still wouldn't fix up his buildings to be safer.

May's and Lee's families had plenty too. She knew they were blessed. Father had told her that over and over. His work in Asian imports had earned him good money, and he'd invested it wisely over the years. Lee's father owned one of the largest fish canneries on the West Coast, and he, too, had invested wisely and now had an entire fishing fleet that provided for his cannery. He was, as Lee had once said, *"Dependent on no one but God."*

"Are you all right?" Lee asked, looking at May as if for any sign of injury.

"I'm fine. He'd just started on me when you showed up." May dusted off her clothes once again.

"I don't know what you're going to do after I move away."

"That won't be for a long time." May looked up into his blue eyes and frowned when they narrowed. He was hiding something. "What is it?" she asked.

"Walk with me, May."

She nodded and kept in step with him as they headed back toward her house. She waited, wondering when he would answer her. Something was clearly not right.

"Lee, what's wrong?"

"I don't know how to say what I must tell you. We've been friends for such a long time, and I've never had this trouble before now."

"We have been friends for a long time, since I was very little." Some of May's first memories were of Lee, her next-door neighbor. They had been boon companions, often sneaking out to meet in the garden at night and gaze up at the stars for hours on end. Lee had talked of how he wished they could fly up into the skies and see the stars up close.

Sometimes they accidentally fell asleep and were discovered by the servants in the morning. Their mothers had been appalled when they found out.

May could see that he was very upset and put her hand on his. “Just tell me what you must, and we will talk it through.”

“My parents bought another house, and we’re moving away. I won’t be around to protect you.”

The pain in his expression matched the ache in her heart. May felt the air go out of her lungs. How could this be true? She twisted one of her black braids. “But why?”

“You know the answer to that as well as I do. They hate people who aren’t white. There are now three families in the neighborhood who have either a mix of races or aren’t white at all. My mother says it’s ruined everything. She said it was hard enough living next to a woman who was Japanese. You know the things she’s said about your folks.”

May nodded. “But she’s very unkind even to her white friends.”

“Yes, Mother is a snob. She thinks that because she was born the daughter of wealthy New Yorkers she has a right to look down on everyone else. She was raised that way.”

“So we must forgive her.” May frowned, and her shoulders drooped. “I can’t believe you’re going to leave me. You’ve been my best friend. None of the other children will even speak to me. Or if they do, they call me all sorts of names and tell me to go back to Japan. What they don’t know is that I would actually love to see it and meet my Japanese family there. My mother, however, will not even consider it. She hates Japan, although I don’t really know why. She won’t talk of it, and Father says we must respect her wishes. We both have difficult mothers.”



“Perhaps, but yours is kind. She has always been nice to me.”

“That’s because you are nice to me. But now I’ll have no one. I suppose I will stay in the house and paint and never come outside again.”

Lee shook his head and touched her shoulder. “You must be brave. You mustn’t let other children make you feel bad. You are a wonderful girl, May, and you belong to Jesus. Because you are His, you will always have the best of friends right here with you—in your heart. Jesus won’t let you face the world alone.”

Tears came to May’s eyes. “But it won’t be the same. I thought you and me . . . I thought we’d always be friends.”

“We will be. I’ll always be your friend, May. No matter how far away I move or how much time passes. I will be your friend until the day I die.”

“I promise to be yours too.” She wiped the tears away and forced a smile. “But it won’t be the same.”

“No.” Lee’s voice was edged with sorrow and resignation. “It won’t ever be the same.”



SEPTEMBER 1909

That's such lovely work, May." Mrs. Pearl Fisher stepped forward to better observe the photograph that May was touching up. People were often willing to pay for color to be added to their exposition photographs, and May was just the artist to handle the matter.

"I'm so glad we hired you to do this." Mrs. Fisher dabbed a cloth to her throat. The warmth of the day had left all of them perspiring.

May glanced up at the older woman. "Thank you."

Mrs. Fisher was such a nice woman to work for at Fisher Photography, temporarily set up at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. The expo had only a month to go until it would close down on October sixteenth, and Seattle would go back to the way things were before all the hoopla and planning of a world's fair took over the minds of its citizens.

The expo had been an amazing experience for May. Not only because she was able to put her interest in painting to use and be paid for it, but because of the incredible display on Japanese history in the Japan building. May had gone

there every day during her break at lunch. She had sometimes taken her sketch pad along and drawn pictures of the various garments displayed. There was also a Japanese village on the Pay Streak Avenue walkway, and May had gone there on many occasions. It was fascinating to see the history of her mother's people presented at the fair.

"Otis and I have talked about having you come work for us at the new shop downtown. Would you be interested in continuing to touch up photographs?"

May smiled. "I would. It's such an enjoyable way to pass the time."

Mrs. Fisher rubbed her oversized abdomen. She was expecting her first baby in a matter of weeks. "We can speak more about it later," she said as two of the Camera Girls came into the shop.

Mary and Esther put the cameras they carried on the counter and waited to be given two more. This was the routine. The Camera Girls would go out and take pictures of tourists and their families with Kodak's new Brownie camera, then when the ten pictures of film were used, they would bring the cameras back with little notes about the pictures. Mrs. Fisher or Mrs. Hanson, the Camera Girls' supervisor, would oversee the development of the photographs and take the notes made by the girls to ensure the right picture was marked for the correct family. Some of the people paid ahead of time for their photos to be mailed, while many showed up in the shop later to see the photographs before buying them. When they saw what May could do, some paid extra money to have colored paint added to their souvenir pictures.

"Here you are, Mrs. Fisher," Mary said, putting several coins on the counter. "I marked who paid and wants the photos mailed. Their addresses are in the notes."

“Thank you, Mary.” Mrs. Fisher moved to the far end of the counter and brought her another camera, already loaded with fresh, unused film.

Mary took the camera and headed for the door. “See you later.”

Esther followed suit. “Most of my people wanted to see the photographs first. I only had one who wanted the post-card mailed.”

“That’s quite fine, Esther. Let me get you a camera.” Mrs. Fisher went to retrieve another Brownie while Esther came to where May was working in the front window. A couple of people had stopped outside the little building to watch her work.

“You have fans,” Esther said.

“People have been stopping by pretty regularly,” May admitted. “I think they are surprised to see someone painting on the postcards. Then they realize what I’m doing and sometimes get very excited about it.”

“Do you suppose we will ever have film that takes colored pictures?”

May shrugged and picked up a brush that barely had any bristles. “I suppose the right person will have to figure it all out, but I don’t know why it couldn’t be done.”

“They’ve already created a process, but I don’t think it’s readily available,” Mrs. Fisher said, returning with the camera. “Here you are, Esther.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Fisher.” Esther didn’t quite look the woman in the eyes.

May had heard that Esther had been a bothersome girl in the first weeks of her working for the Fishers. There had been some trouble with Addie’s brothers, and Esther had gotten herself involved with the oldest one. The entire matter

was quite the sensation of the expo. Addie's brothers had held her hostage, knowing their sister had hidden gold she brought back from the Yukon. They nearly killed her, but in the end, it was they who died.

May felt sorry for Esther. None of the other girls seemed to want to get close to her, despite Addie encouraging everyone to forgive and befriend her. May had taken it upon herself to be extra nice to Esther. She knew what it was to be ignored or worse, bullied and picked on for being different.

"Are you having any luck selling the camera?" May asked.

"I've tried. We never know until Mrs. Fisher tells us later because we don't take the cameras out with us to sell on the grounds."

May nodded. She knew how the system worked. The girls handed out souvenir business cards with the Fisher Photography studio information on one side and the official Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition logo on the other. Each girl would pencil her name at the top, and when someone bought a camera, it was credited to her as being the official salesperson. They each earned a commission on the cameras they sold, and this constituted the better part of their salary.

Thankfully, the cameras had been popular at the AYP, as the employees of the expo called it. The girls had done well with their commissions, and the Fishers had sold enough of the cameras that Kodak had made their shop an official provider. Mr. Fisher was even going to take the train back east, where Kodak was located, for some special training regarding the cameras once the expo was concluded.

"I'll see you later," Esther said, heading for the door.

May gave her a little wave, then gently touched her brush, what little there was of it, into the honey-brown color she'd

created and dabbed it onto the photograph to highlight the woman's hair. She'd seen the couple earlier and thought the woman's hair quite pretty. She hoped to capture that in her work.

When the clock chimed five, May put away her paints and brushes as the Camera Girls filed back in one by one. There was a great deal of chattering about the day and all that had taken place.

"Tomorrow is Japan Day," Mary told May as she took off the camera from around her neck.

"I know. I'm very excited to see what all they do." May continued cleaning her station.

"I heard there would be a parade from the Japanese village to the Japan building," Mary added. "It's first thing in the morning."

May smiled. "I have the day off and intend to watch it all and listen to the speakers and hear the Japanese musicians. I am quite excited."

Mary nodded and returned May's smile. "I hope you enjoy yourself. If I were off, I would join you, but I'll probably be too busy photographing people. Maybe I can come find you at lunch."

"One of the restaurants is going to serve authentic Japanese food. I want to try it all," May said with a laugh.

Her mother never allowed Japanese food to be served in the house. On more than one occasion May had snuck downtown to the Japanese area of Seattle—Japantown. Bordered by Yesler Way and Dearborn on the north and south ends, and Fourth and Fourteenth Avenues on the east and west, Japantown offered May a glimpse into a world she had only dreamed about. It was here she had sampled a few classic dishes, but she'd never told her mother. She knew the older

woman would have been very upset to know that May was even interested in such things.

But she was.

She longed to know about her Japanese ancestors and the culture of Japan. She had tried so many times to get her mother to open up and talk about it, but it almost always resulted in either tears or silence. Japan, her father had once told her, had been most hurtful to her mother, and she left many bad feelings there when she got on the boat for America.

When May had first heard of the expo and its plans for promoting Japan and other Pacific Islands, she knew she wanted to somehow be a part of it. Upon visiting, she'd seen the advertisement at Fisher Photography for Camera Girls. When she went in to speak to the owner about the job, somehow the conversation had turned to May being an artist. One thing led to another, and Mr. Fisher asked if she thought she could touch up the photographs with color. May was confident she could, and so she was hired. It turned out to be the perfect job for her, although she was also trained on the Brownie.

"Maybe I'll see you out there." Mary headed for the back room. "If not, I hope you enjoy your day."

May gave a wave, then gathered her things. She secured her straw boater atop her head and stuck a hatpin through to hold it in place. She wore the same uniform as the other Camera Girls because from time to time she would actually go out and take photographs if they were shorthanded. She didn't mind, however. The black skirt and high-necked white blouse were simple and comfortable. Besides, most of the time she wore a smock over her clothes when she painted and kept the straw hat hanging by the door.

“I’ll be going now,” she told Mrs. Fisher.

“Be careful.”

“I will.” May headed for the door with one backward glance at her station. Everything was in order.

She headed for the front gate and the trolley. She couldn’t help thinking of tomorrow and how much fun it was going to be. She hadn’t told her family yet of her intentions but supposed she would have to do so that evening. They would expect her to have the day off as she did most Saturdays. May had considered lying, but her Christian values wouldn’t let her. She knew she would be restless and sick to her stomach unless she told the truth. So she would just start with the truth. If Mama got too distraught, she would think of something to say or do to calm her.



“Please don’t get upset, Mama. I haven’t asked you to talk about Japan in a long time. I’ve tried to be considerate, but you must understand. I’m twenty-three and long to know about my family. Your family and the land you were born in.”

Father gave May a shrug and smile. “We must be patient. Those memories are difficult for your mother.”

Her mother’s brown-black eyes closed as she drew in a long, heavy breath. This was typical of Mama trying to calm herself. “I’m sorry, May. It’s just . . . so much happened.”

“Please try to understand my heart, Mama.”

“May’s right, Kame,” Father declared. “She should go to the celebration of Japan Day. It will do her good.”

“Japan was never good to me.” Mama opened her eyes and looked at May. “But you can go if it pleases you. I will not forbid it.”



“Thank you, Mama.” May got up and put her arms around her mother. She kissed her lightly on the cheek, then hugged her. “I love you so much.”

Her mother sighed and patted May’s arm. “I love you too, my darling. I only want to save you pain.”

May let go her hold and straightened. “But maybe if you allowed me to share the burden, it wouldn’t cause you quite so much pain and sadness.”

“This burden is one of great shame, May. I cannot desire that you share it,” Mama said, looking up at her. She placed her napkin on the table as May reclaimed her seat. “I will go and rest now.” She got up from the table and smiled at May and her father. “You are the only ones who matter to me. The past holds nothing but sorrow.” With that, she left the room.

May couldn’t help but feel saddened by her mother’s retreat. She was running from the past as if it could hurt her all over again if she dared to speak of it.

“Why can’t she just let go?” May whispered the question, not really expecting an answer.

“I don’t know. I’ve tried to help her do exactly that for years,” May’s father replied.

“Why can’t you tell me about it?” May looked to her father, whose emerald eyes matched her own. It was one of the only features she’d inherited from her father. Otherwise, she was the spitting image of her mother, but with more muted Asian features.

“May, it is your mother’s story to tell. Even I don’t know all of the details.” He placed his napkin on the table. “What I do know is that your mother suffers greatly from her memories. She always has. I keep praying that God will release her from the power they hold over her.”

“I pray that as well. I pray, too, that one day she will tell me about Japan and the family we must surely still have there.”

“Just don’t push her too hard, May. Have mercy on her.” Father got to his feet and smiled. “And remember, I have told you plenty of stories about my family. At least you have that much.”

“But that’s only half,” May replied. “And it makes me feel as if I’m only half a person. Will I never know the whole person?”

Her father smiled. “I think you are a beautiful young woman, and in time you will know what you need to know. Now, I will go sit with your mother and make sure her sorrow passes.”

May watched him go and thought of the pain she’d caused. She hadn’t meant to hurt her mother. *But I knew this would cause her pain. I’m a cruel daughter to do such a thing.* She glanced heavenward. “But what do I do, Lord? I am equal parts Japanese and American. I long to know who I am and who my people are and why the past is so hard for my mother to deal with.”

She left the dining room and headed to her art studio. This was the only place of solace for her. Father had arranged it for her sixteenth birthday, giving her a first-floor room that had once been a small parlor for receiving guests. Mama had agreed that the larger parlor was more than enough for them. They didn’t hold parties or entertain that much. May had been overjoyed at having her own studio. It had perhaps been the most thoughtful gift anyone had ever given her.

Closing the pocket doors behind her, May breathed in deeply. The scent of paint and turpentine, canvas and charcoal, lingered as a faint reminder of projects she had in progress. The ceiling was high—some fourteen feet with

four large windows that started a couple of feet off the floor and ended a couple of feet from the crown molding. With the draperies pulled back, the light flooded the room during the day. At night, Father had arranged for her to have special lamps that put off a great deal of light. There were easels for her canvases. Tables and cabinets for her paints and brushes, and in the corner, a couple of chairs so that May could sit and contemplate or sketch. It was really all that she could want.

She pulled on her smock and walked around the room as she did up the buttons. She was anxious to get back to work on a landscape she'd sketched out down by the lake near the expo. Raising the covering from the canvas, May whispered a prayer for her mother.

The barely started painting was little more than brushstrokes of color and smudged shadows. Layer upon layer, May would work the paint to become something defined and understandable. She supposed her desire to know about the past was no different. There were the hints of life in Japan. The shadows of hidden sorrows . . . bursts of light revealing concealed secrets. The details needed careful crafting by one who knew the truth of each event. And that wasn't May.

She frowned. For now, she needed to put her desires aside. Tomorrow she would explore the generalized history of Japan. Maybe somewhere in the middle of it all, she would find her part of that mysterious country.



“Kame, you mustn’t continue to carry this,” Russell Parker told his wife. “My dear, you must allow God to heal you from the past.”

“I want that more than I can say,” she admitted. “I hate the pain it has caused.”

“It has created a wall between you and May. She’s entitled to know about her history—her family.”

“They are no more.”

“There are others. You are not without relatives. What about the letters that came to my company? You have relatives who desire to know where you are and how you are doing.”

“For what purpose?” Her pale face was streaked with tears.

“Perhaps for the purpose of love and forgiveness. Perhaps a new start.”

“I will continue to pray about it, Russ. I promise. Right now, however, my head is splitting, and I must rest. Forgive me.” She turned her back so that he might unfasten the buttons on her silk gown.

“There is nothing to forgive.” He finished with the buttons and placed a light kiss on her neck. “I love you, my dear. More now than even when I married you, and my love for you then was fierce.” He turned her to face him. “You are my life, and I will do whatever I can to protect you from harm.”

She wrapped her arms around his waist and rested her cheek against his chest. Nothing more needed to be said. Russell knew she would push back all the memories that threatened to surface. She would cover them over with happier thoughts and refuse to consider them anymore. In the morning, she would awake refreshed and happy. This was her way of survival and had been for the last thirty-two years. All he could do was continue to pray for her.

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