



Unafraid of the Dark: A Memoir

Rosemary Bray

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In this stunning memoir, Rosemary Bray describes growing up poor in Chicago in the 1960s and becoming one of the first black women at Yale--and she shows why changes in the welfare system make it virtually impossible for her inspiring story to happen today.

"Certain things shape you, change you forever," Bray writes. "Years later, long after you think you've escaped, some ordinary experience flings you backward into memory. Being poor is like that. Living surrounded by fear and rage is like that. I grew up hating the cold, dreading the approach of night. Thirty years later, a too-cold room at night can trigger a flash of terror."

When Rosemary Bray's mother decides to apply for welfare, it creates a rift between her parents, and yet it proves to be the salvation of the family, enabling the Bray children to be educated--and education was the one thing her parents agreed upon as the only way to a better life. Bray writes movingly about her resourceful mother, who joins the Catholic church and shepherds the children to school. The nuns at the Catholic school spot Rosemary's potential and arrange for her to become one of the few black children at Parker, a predominantly white private school on the other side of Chicago. In a series of powerful vignettes, Bray describes the shock of discovering the discrepancies between her life and the lives of her affluent classmates. She writes of the experiences that gave her hope: a teacher fostering her development and choosing her to play the title role in *Alice in Wonderland*; the thrill of being accepted at Yale; falling in love; becoming a journalist; and, ultimately, becoming a mother.

In this beautiful memoir about how the dark in a life can be overcome, race, gender, and social problems are explored as a fine writer tells the story of a life.

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