

# CLOUDS ABOVE DIAMONDS

Rochell Myles

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*Clouds Above Diamonds* is a work of fiction, except for one character. However, a real-life family member inspired me to write about how he didn't let his disability define him. And I am grateful that he allowed me to tell his story. All other characters, names, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, organizations, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

This book deals with traumatic or triggering themes, child abuse, and domestic violence. The author has made an extreme effort to ensure the subject matter is dealt with compassionately and respectfully, and it may be troubling for some readers. Discretion is advised.

THE KING LAWS OF LA HOPE

YE MUST CONFESS YOUR TRANSGRESSION.  
YE MUST NEVER USE BRIGHT LIGHTS.  
YE MUST ALWAYS BE LOYAL TO LOYALTY.  
ALL RESIDENTS ON THE ISLAND OF LA HOPE HAVE ACCESS TO  
MEDICAL, MEDICATION, AND DENTAL AT NO COST.  
YE MUST REMOVE SHOES BEFORE ENTERING THE THRONE ROOM.  
YE MUSTN'T LIE  
YE MUSTN'T STEAL.  
NO MAXIMUM RESTRICTION ON HERBS YOU CAN HAVE AT THE GARDEN OF  
PLENTY. IN LA HOPE THE HERBS ARE FOR ANY ADULT OVER THE AGE OF 21.  
BE AWARE OF THE DIFFERENT STRAINS AND ONLY SMOKE WHAT YOUR  
LUNGS CAN HANDLE.  
DO NOT TRAVEL BY BOAT ON MAY 30TH.  
NO EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN LA HOPE.  
WOMEN MUST NEVER REFUSE THEIR HUSBAND IN A SEX SITUATION.  
WOMEN MUST ALWAYS OBEY THEIR HUSBAND.  
ENTERING THE TUNNEL IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION.

IF YOU BREAK MY LAWS, AND IF YOU ARE FOUND GUILTY AFTER A TRIAL, THE  
PUNISHMENT IS DEATH.

EVERY RESIDENT OF LA HOPE WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS LEGAL DOCUMENT. PLEASE SIGN ON THE LINE NEXT TO THE X AND  
DATE BELOW. BY SIGNING YOUR SIGNATURE, YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE LAWS PRESENTED  
ENTIRELY AND THAT YOU CERTIFY THE KING HAS READ OVER THESE LAWS TO YOU AND THAT YOU HAVE REPEATED THE LAWS  
BACK TO THE KING AS YOU UNDERSTOOD THEM. THESE ARE THE LAWS OF LA HOPE, AND NO ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW.

LOYALTY DIAMOND RECEIVER: X \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

KING: X *Amir S. Diamonds* \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED AND SEALED BY KING AMIR S. DIAMONDS



## CHAPTER 1

# Family Traditions

THE DARKNESS COVERED the sky as the thick clouds set above the Diamond family's castle.

"Mother, the enemies have arrived," Princess Crystal said.

"Yes, I know," I replied.

Our enemies invade the castle. They wanted to kill our entire family and steal my family's fortune, our diamonds. The enemy's leader led his followers through the front gates. He looked up at me as I stood on the balcony and remembered the pain he suffered at my father's hands, King Amir Diamonds.

"Enemies, drop your weapons and raise your hands high in the air. Surrender now, and I will let you live, but only to become my prisoners, for this will be your only chance," I said.

At first, I thought the enemies would surrender as my loved ones and I stood on the balcony, staring down upon men and women with hatred in their eyes. The leader raised his hands, holding his sword, and then his followers raised their hands, still carrying their swords.

"You are not my Queen, and I will not surrender and become your prisoner, but I will give you all the chance to surrender. For this will be your last warning before I kill all of you and then feed you to your lions," the leader said.

Seconds later, the leader charged forward, his sword in his right hand, towards the throne room to storm the castle with his

followers right behind him. The battle began, and I gave direct orders to my son, the Prince of Diamonds.

“Shoot fire from your hands in the enemies’ direction,” I said.

A blazing fire burns on the castle grounds. My loved ones and I watched the fire burn.

“Prince, release ice to put out the intense flames, but don’t freeze their bodies. Leave me ashes,” I said. Prince Ice released icicles from his enormous hands in the direction of our enemies.

MY NAME IS Loyalty Moore Diamonds. Twenty-four years earlier, I dreamed of this battle on my twelfth birthday on the island of La Hope, where I reside. My father interrupted my dream when he stormed into my bedroom in the middle of the night. I didn’t see the end of the dream, only the beginning. My father, king of the island of La Hope, walked into my bedroom, dressed in a white short-sleeve silk shirt, white pants, and walking in luxurious white flat shoes with tiny colorless diamonds around the entire shoe. We call them ice bottoms, and the name came from my grandfather, King Asul. He had my ancestors add diamonds on the outer sole and used a hammer to secure them, ensuring the diamonds never touched the ground. And when my ancestors made the first pair, the shoes didn’t shine bright, so my grandfather added diamonds to the entire shoe. And when King Asul held the shoes in his hands, he said the diamonds on the bottom felt cold, like ice.

“Loyalty! Loyalty, wake up,” my father said in a high-pitched voice.

I heard my father’s voice, and I was startled, waking to see my father standing over my bed. My eyes opened. I struggled to get up.

I stretched my arms out against the warm silk sheets and

yawned at the same time. I rolled over on my side in bed and looked out of my floor-to-ceiling windows at the pitch-black sky. The sound of the flowing waterfall made me want to go back to sleep. I rolled onto my back and pulled the white silk sheet over my head. “I’m awake, and you woke me from a great dream.”

My father snatched the sheet off of my face. “Get up. We must leave at once.”

“Where are we going at this time of night, and where is my mother?”

“There is no time to explain. Get up now if you want to become a great queen someday.”

I climbed out of bed and had no time to get dressed. My father grabbed a lit torch from the holster posted on the wall. The castle was quiet, but the loud sounds of my father’s footsteps could have woken everyone. We walked through the hallways to get downstairs and exit the court at the rear entrance. My father was holding the lit torch in his left hand. I was walking in the grass barefoot, wearing a knee-length white silk gown. I reached for my father’s right hand, but he refused. The white limestone castle has a huge flag with a diamond on it blowing in the wind. The castle has sat on top of the highest mountain for hundreds of years and has over 250 rooms. It has two huge doors with a lion’s face posted in the center of the door that leads to the throne room—surrounded by palm trees and gigantic waterfalls. La Hope has three islands. The castle is on the northernmost, and the people of La Hope reside twelve miles south on the second. The third is Leaf Island. Leaf Island grows different strains of herbs at the Garden of Plenty.

My father pushed open the colorless diamond gates to exit the castle grounds, and we walked down a straight white stone gravel path. I looked back and saw the fading white bricks in the distance as my feet started to ache from walking on the hard

stones. Suddenly, my father told me how our family got our fortune of diamonds.

“Many centuries ago, people believed that the island La Hope was not real,” the king said.

“But why did people not believe that La Hope was real?”

“Well, let me tell you the story my father told me when I was your age while we walk. The word traveled quickly about a hidden treasure on an island, but many lions guarded these diamonds. And to claim the diamonds, one must tame the lions without being viciously attacked and eaten by the beasts.”

I tucked my silky black hair behind my ear which had fallen in my eyes while trying to keep up with my father’s pace. “Father, that seems very difficult to do. Where were the diamonds hidden?”

“Yes, it was quite difficult but not impossible. Somebody hid the treasure inside of a dark tunnel. Many men and even women tried to tame the lions and failed until one day, your grandfather was brave enough to go into the lion’s den at your age. First, his father taught him how to stare down a lion, and when my father was ready to attempt to tame the lions and claim the diamonds, he and his father traveled by boat to La Hope.”

As I walked, sweat dripped down my palms and fell into the grass as I became anxious.

“What happened when they got to La Hope?” I asked.

“They used a map to find the tunnel located near a waterfall. My father told me that, at first, they almost gave up when they couldn’t find the tunnel, but King Asul begged his father to keep looking, and suddenly they stumbled upon the dark tunnel.”

“The tunnel was dark?”

“Yes.”

I was scared of the dark, and my hands start to shake. “What happened next?”

“They entered the dark tunnel and walked with a lit torch, and when they found the lion’s den, my grandfather’s body started to shut down. He handed the torch to his son and sat down on the concrete floor, right next to the door, while his son turned the knob only to find the door locked. They could hear the lion’s roar and movement.”

“How did they unlock the door?”

“When your grandfather shinned the light on the wall, he saw a set of keys with a written message carved into the wall right next to the door.”

“What did the message say?”

*“One of these keys will unlock the lion’s den. You must hang the set of keys back up before opening the door, and if you tame the lions, you will become the King or Queen, inherit the diamonds, the island of La Hope, and your last name will change to Diamonds. If you make it out the lion’s den alive, take the keys with you, for you are now the rightful owner.”*

“But how would anyone know if people followed these directions?”

“There is no way of getting around these instructions.”

“So my grandfather was much like you?”

“Yes. Your grandfather taught me how to tame lions.”

I had chills radiating throughout my body, but I wanted to hear more of what happened.

“Ouch!” I shouted.

“What happened?”

“I stepped on something. I cut my feet.”

“I’m sure it’s minor. You will be alright. Now where was I? Well, a twelve-year-old boy unlocked the door as his father sat in the hallway. He didn’t have the heart of a lion, but his son did. My father walked inside the lion’s den, shinning the light inside the room. And the lead lion quickly approached him, but my



father wasn't bothered. He stood still and allowed the beast to sniff around him. The lion faced my father with his big baggy eyes and deep orange, brown fur."

Quickly, I grabbed my father's hand, and he embraced me. I felt safe. "What did my grandfather do next?"

"He stared down one of the biggest and toughest lions as his father called on The Clouds to protect his one and only son. My father heard a gentle voice whisper in his ear."

"Whose voice did he hear?"

"He heard The Clouds' voice."

"And what did The Clouds tell my grandfather?"

"The Clouds told him that he was the king of La Hope. The lions laid down on the concrete floor, and my father spoke to the lions."

"Father, what did he say to the lions?"

"Your grandfather told the lions to clear a path, so he could see and claim his family's fortune."

"My grandfather became the king of La Hope at twelve?" "Yes.

And many men were upset that a child was able to tame the lions and claim the diamonds—the reason we have so many enemies. Our enemies have tried for years to steal our diamonds from us even though they had the same opportunity as my father, but they weren't capable of completing the task."

"But who left us the diamonds?" I asked.

"I'm afraid no one knows who left the diamonds."

"If my grandfather was the king at twelve, what title did his father have?"

"My dear, I'm afraid your great-grandfather didn't make it out of the dark tunnel alive."

A single tear rolled down my cheek. "Oh no. What happened to him? Did the lion's eat him?"

"No, your great-grandfather had a heart attack while his son

was becoming a king.”

I felt overwhelmed with sadness. “I’m sorry to hear about my great-grandfather’s death. I’m sure my grandfather was devastated to find his father dead in the hallway after all he accomplished.”

After walking for an extended time, I hadn’t realized we had arrived at an old dark tunnel that I had never seen, and next to the tunnel was a flowing waterfall. The water was splashing against the rocks and flowing down into what looked like three feet of water.

“Where are we?” I asked.

“This is the dark tunnel your grandfather entered with his father many years ago. Our last name comes from the diamonds hidden inside of the tunnel.”

I looked down. My feet were dirty. “But why have you brought me here?” I asked.

My father lifted my chin. “Stop worrying about your feet. You must focus on the task before you.”

I wasn’t worried about my injured foot. My hands were trembling. I was scared of the dark, and my heart was pounding out of my chest. My father had always known that, when I turned 12, I would have to start my training to rule the island kingdom someday, but I was in shock, and my father gave me no indication he was passing down the crown to me. I’m my father’s only heir to the throne. However, to take the throne would require extensive mental and physical training. To become great, one must possess a lion’s heart or face defeat.

The stars were shining bright above us. I locked my eyes on the dark tunnel as I watched my father enter the tunnel, but I paused and gazed up at the hidden clouds as the cool breeze blew through my hair. My father whisked me inside the massive dim tunnel and almost dropped the torch. Beams held up the tunnel, and the walls had an off-white cement color. We walked at a

steady pace through the smoky tunnel. I was shivering, tired, and unfamiliar with my surroundings. Many thoughts raced through my mind of the story my father had just told me, and I wondered if my grandfather felt like me, afraid of walking through the dark tunnel with one way in and out as we walked straight ahead with nowhere to turn. After walking for a while through the tunnel, we arrived at a steel door leading into a room. I thought to myself, *Is this the lion's den?* My father seemed familiar with this place. He took his torch and placed it inside a holster mounted on the steel door's right side to free his hands and then reached into his left pocket to take out a set of keys to unlock the door. He turned the doorknob, and it swung wide open. I was shocked to see the written message carved into the wall.

"Father, would you teach me how to read someday?"

"You don't need to learn how to read. I have taught you how to hold intelligent conversations."

*ROARRRR*. The vibration caused the high dust to blow around the tunnel.

I jumped and covered my head while coughing. "Calm down. The lions can smell the blood from your foot," the king said.

I was shaking nervously. I tried to wipe the dirt from my eyes. "I'm not going into that room with lions."

My father grabbed the torch out of the holster and walked into the sizable chilly room first. "Get in here right now," His voice began to rise. The room had a distinct smell of feces. My father placed the lit torch inside the holster mounted on the left side of the wall next to the steel door to brighten the room. While standing in the doorway entrance, I shield my eyes with my hands to block the 6x8 diamond cage covered in colorless diamonds.

"You have arrived. Now, open your eyes."

Slowly, I put my hands down and became amused with how bright the diamonds shined on the cage. I looked around the

room and saw that the white concrete walls were old and had cracks throughout their foundation. And when I looked down and saw the concrete floor covered in dirt, my skin started to itch. Inside of the cage had only a white bucket.

“Where are we?” I asked.

“This is your lion’s den. Your grandfather built this diamond cage for me with his bare hands and it’s also where he trained me to stare down a lion. Down the hall is where we keep our family’s fortune of diamonds.”

“Okay. Now can we please go?”

“My dear, you cannot leave. You have to learn how to stare down a lion. It’s the only way to tame a beast. And besides, you must prove your loyalty to me before taking the throne.”

“What? How can I prove my loyalty to you?”

“You can prove yourself to me by learning how to live without me, and then we can start your training. I will teach you how to stare down and tame a lion. I stared down my first lion at eighteen.”

“How can I live without you?” I asked.

“I am afraid I cannot answer that, but I need you to do this, and one day when you’re standing on top of the highest mountain with your loved ones, you will thank me for all that I’m giving you, to help you become your true self.”

“But I don’t want to stay here alone.”

“Your grandfather and I both had to do this, and now you have the same opportunity to develop enough skills to lead the lions and the loyal citizens of La Hope.”

“But I am not you nor my grandfather.”

“This is true because, if you were anything like us, you would not be whining and complaining. Now toughen up!” the king said in a stern voice.

“I will prove to you that the daughter you never wanted can

do the same thing a son is capable of.”

“I wanted a son to continue my legacy.”

“I can continue your legacy as a queen. I will be a good queen that will protect and take care of my people. I will make sure that all loyalists follow the law.”

“Yes. But you can never be a king, and I’m afraid after I die there will be no other king in the Diamonds family.”

“But what about my uncles?”

“They cannot become a king.”

“But why?”

“Because they are not lionhearted!” the king shouted.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“You ask too many questions. All I need is for you to commit to taking the throne.”

And suddenly, I remember the story about my grandfather. “Will I be safe?”

“The lions will not alarm you. I’m the only person who can unlock the steel doors so you will be safe.”

My legs were numb as I glanced through the open-door cage. “All right. I will do it.”

“Then what are you waiting for? Get inside the cage.” I hesitated before stepping inside of the sparkling cage as my father stood firm. I entered at a slow pace.

“When will you come back for me?” I asked.

“You will stay here inside of your cage until you become capable of all your duties to serve, and when you’re ready, I will then allow you to battle a lion to prove that you’re lionhearted and can defeat one. As often as I can, I will see you, for I am still the king, and I have my duties but do not worry. I will notify the servants to serve you well by bringing you food daily and clothes as needed, but for now, I command you to stay inside of this cage until we start your training,” the king said in a stern voice.

I grab the chilled bars and felt something wet my hands. It was from the fresh polish. My father walked over to a wooden table to retrieve a white wool blanket, two candles, a roll of tissue, and a book of matches. He handed me these items, and then I sat them on the hard concrete floor. I was confused about why I was sleeping on the floor instead of in a bed. There was no sink or toilet. I had never lived in these conditions, but I held my composure in fear of displeasing my father again. Before my father left, he kissed my forehead through the bars and locked the cage.

“What is the white bucket for?” I asked.

“It is your toilet, and it will be emptied and cleaned daily.”

I waited for my father to put his keys inside his left pocket before I gave a formal curtsy, and when the king walked over to the steel door, he looked back at me.

“I have to take the torch with me when I leave, so I can see walking through the dark tunnel. You should light a candle so that you’re not sitting in the dark but try to preserve the candles until we meet again. My dear, when I return to the castle, I will give the servants direct orders on how they will serve you as I see fit. Settle in until we meet again,” he said.

My father grabs the torch out of the holster and exits the room. I started to cry after my father left me alone.

“Goodbye, Father,” I said silently.

I heard my father locking the steel door, and then there was silence. The next morning, servants arrived to serve me breakfast.

“Hello,” I said.

The three servants ignored me and remained silent.

“Would the three of you please acknowledge me speaking to you?” I asked.

Again silence. The torch holder stood over by the door entrance shining a light on the cage. At the same time, the key-man

unlocked the cage, and then the server walked over to the diamond cage, carrying a crystal tray with scrambled eggs, toast, turkey bacon, fresh fruit, and water. My father made sure to send me a carat diamond per day. The servant set the tray down on the concrete floor as I stood watching him. The key-man walked back to the cage and locked it. Then they left as I sat down to eat my meal. I cringed after the door closed. I hated hearing the door close. It reminded me that I was alone. During my training, my father visited me four times during the first year in confinement, and he didn't allow my mother, Alice, or the rest of my family to see me in the tunnel. I felt like an animal inside of this tiny cage. I missed my life and family, but my father firmly believed that keeping our loved ones away during the process eliminated all distractions.

I laid on the ground with my hands behind my head with my eyes closed, but I wasn't asleep. I missed the citrus smell of my mother's perfume, but most of all, I hoped she still loved me after not seeing or hearing from me in almost three years. Over time, I became paranoid, worried they'd all forget me. I noticed my sleeping habits were changing, and I slept more than usual. I couldn't wait to close my eyes so I could dream of sleeping in my bed back at the castle with warm silk sheets and blankets. I missed bathing and the Island of La Hope's tropical scenery. To help the time pass, I started exercising to help increase my energy levels. I imagined myself as the queen daily to keep my spirits up, but my state of mind became worse as I started talking to myself.

On my fifteenth birthday, my father came to see me and brought gifts. After he hung the lit torch on the holster, he walked over to sit the gifts on the wooden table, and I gave a formal bow before the king. I looked messy and unclean, but I was happy to see him after so much time has passed.

"Have you come to take me back home with you to the cas-

tle?” I anxiously asked.

“No, I am afraid not, for you’re not ready yet, but I wanted to visit you on your fifteenth birthday,” he said in a stern voice.

“Thank you for the visit and gifts, but I miss my mother, and I would love to see her.”

“Yes, I know, but this process is tough. I went through the same training, and I understand that you miss your mother, and she misses you too, but you cannot see your mother right now. I’m afraid I cannot stay long, but I wanted to drop off some gifts and to wish you a happy birthday.”

For a second, I lost my mind and shouted in rage.

“Do not leave me! Please, take me with you.”

My father didn’t respond. He walked over to the tarnished wooden table to pick up the gifts he brought and handed me a folded silk blanket, five candles, and four books of matches.

“I almost forgot,” the king said.

The king walked over to the steel doors, where he had left a white bucket filled with room temperature water and a bar of soap sitting at the bottom of the bucket. He picked up the white bucket and walked back to the cage, carefully holding it so the water didn’t spill onto the floor.

“I brought you some freshwater so you can clean yourself thoroughly.”

My father sits the water bucket on the concrete floor. I hold my composure as he locks the cage door.

“Goodbye, until we meet again.”

“Goodbye, Father,” I said, bowing down.

I didn’t know when I would see my father again, so I preserved the candles by sitting in the dark, and I did this for many hours a day. I had embraced the darkness, and it had adopted me. And when my father returned to the castle, he ordered the staff to bring me a warm bucket of fresh water once a week and added



another servant to my team to ensure this took place.

I received the best service, even though my living conditions were nearly unbearable. My health declined. I had trouble breathing, headaches, body aches, and dizziness. I felt like I was running out of time, and I didn't want my father to discover my dead body, so I held on. One day I used the last candle, and so I sat still and continued my daily routine. I ate meals three times a day, drank water, and collected another carat diamond. I gained a new outlook on life, growing up inside a cage made out of diamonds, but over time, the colorless diamonds changed, transforming into a light-yellow color. My unknown loyal friend and I had formed a bond, but I had learned not to trust anyone so quickly. I knew that she would have to prove herself to me if she wanted my loyalty.

"Loyalty, how are you today?" a voice said. It was the voice I sometimes heard when I sat in the dark long enough.

*"I wasn't having a good day until you arrived, glad for the company,"* I said in my mind.

"I will never leave your side," the voice said.

*"Thanks for being by my side through my darkest days."*

"You don't have to thank me. I will forever be loyal to you," the voice said.

*"I think that it's time I give you a name. I will call you the Queen of Darkness."*

"I love the name you have chosen for me. And I will forever be grateful," the Queen of Darkness said.

The next day, the servants entered the lion's den to drop off my breakfast and supplies. I sat in silence; I had learned how to live without my loved ones. After I finished my meal, I stood, holding on to the diamond bars. A sharp pain radiated to my brain. My eyes felt heavy and rolled into the back of my head as my heartbeat became fast. I collapsed onto the hard concrete

floor, hitting my head. The blood rushed to my brain. I was gasping for air, but I was not alone. I heard a voice, but it wasn't the Queen of Darkness.

"Great One. You have the heart of the lion, and you will roar," The Clouds said.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am The Clouds Above Diamonds," The Clouds said.

"Yes. And what do you want with me?" I asked.

And then there was silence. I fought hard to hold on, but I knew just how easy it was to let go. My eyes struggled to open as my heart's rhythm slowly returned to normal. I reached out to grab the diamond bars but struggled to pull myself up, but I refused to give up. Again, I reached for the bars, held onto them with a tight grip, and lifted myself. I roared. It's out of character for me, but I do it again. This time much deeper and stronger than before. I feel like a lion—my roar echoed throughout the tunnel. And when the other lions hear my roar down the hallway, they roared back to defend their territory.

A DAY LATER, the king visited his daughter and brought a warm bucket of water with soap. The king entered the lion's den as Loyalty slept on the hard concrete floor, wrapped in a filthy silk blanket, unaware of her father's presence. The king walked over to the left side of the room. He put his index finger on a light switch and flicked it upward, and the bright lights came on. The spider webs covered the light above. The king had lights installed in the tunnel years ago. He had wired the lion's den separately.

I quickly jumped up, but I didn't understand what was going on. The intense lights made my eyes extremely sensitive. I was upset with my father. It seemed like I had awakened from a bad dream. I wondered how this at all could be possible since I had

never seen actual lights.

Wiping the tears away caused discomforting pain in my eyes.  
“Father, what is going on?”

“Bow before your king. You know better than to speak before greeting me first.”

I stood up and gave a simple curtsy as the tears poured down my face. My eyes were sensitive to the light. I felt dizzy and sat down on the chilled concrete floor to gather my thoughts.

“Loyalty, your father has deceived you about the lights,” the Queen of Darkness said.

*Yes, I know,* I replied in my mind.

“Stand up to him, or I will take care of him,” the Queen of Darkness said.

*I will,* I said in my mind.

**To read more, “Clouds Above Diamonds” is Now Available! for Pre-Order.**