

# BOOTSIE'S SHADY PAST

By

DENIECE KEENER CLARKE

For those who don't know me, I'm Deniece Keener Clarke—Bootsie's youngest.

You've heard a lot of sweet and funny stories about Bootsie's life and all those are true. My mom was smart, practical, pragmatic and had tons of common sense. Usually. But when it came to her criminal activities, she could be a bit naïve.

And just for the record, she was okay with my sharing these stories with you.

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In September 1976, we lived in Fritch, Texas. I had just started college, but came home to watch our dog, Kyla, while Mom and Dad went to Hawaii to see Randy, Glorianna and their new baby Joshua.

They got home and she was unpacking and telling me all about her trip. She reached into her suitcase, pulled out a pair of her underwear and unrolled a giant green leaf.

She held it up and asked, "Do you know what this is?"

I said, "YES, I know what that is! Do YOU know what it is?"

She leaned over and whispered, "It's marijuana!"

I said, "I know it's marijuana! Why is it in your suitcase?"

She said, "This stuff just grows wild in Hawaii. I wanted to bring it home to show you what it looks like."

I said, "DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH TROUBLE YOU'D BE IN IF YOU GOT CAUGHT WITH THAT?"

She rolled her eyes at me and said, "Oh Deniece! Nobody's going to go through an old lady's underwear looking for marijuana!!"

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Not very many people know about this next story, but fortunately she was delighted to share it with Traci, Amanda, Corrine, and Piper a few weeks ago, so I have permission and witnesses.

I waited until now to tell it, because frankly, I'm not sure what the statute of limitations is on this, and I didn't want the government hauling her out of the nursing home.

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Years ago, I decided to sit down with my mom and get those favorite family stories on paper so we wouldn't lose the details. We'd talked about her earliest memories, her family, the Depression, Dust Bowl Days, and World War II. A lot of the stories I had heard a million times, but there were some surprises. One really BIG surprise.

One day, I asked her what it was like when all the soldiers came home from the war. She said, "You know, it was hard because there were so many men all looking for jobs. There weren't many jobs to be had. Finally, Logan got a job at the Kia Typewriter Company as a typewriter repairman in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and I got a job working at the Atomic Energy Commission.

"Really? What did you do there?" I asked.

Her quote: "I was an Ozalid operator. The Ozalid was a big machine that printed blueprints onto linen fabric. Every morning, I'd fill the machine with ammonia, then spend the day making blueprints. Every so often, we'd have a misprint, and they couldn't use them. Since I hated to see all that nice fabric go to waste, I'd fold them up and take them home with me. I'd bleach the fabric to get rid of the blueprints, cut them into smaller pieces, and embroider flowers on them to make dresser scarves."

Then she casually added: "Years later, I found out that the blueprints were classified as Top Secret and I could have gone to prison for a *very* long time if I had been caught!"

If my mom had been busted for espionage Randy and I wouldn't be here.