

BY DESIGN TRILOGY

J BOYKIN BAKER

PRESS KIT



Anne Boyd, steeped in Southern culture and still attached to a mother lost years before, struggles with a new passion and an old promise as she learns that allowing one choice to direct her life can be uncomfortably wonderful.

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MEET THE AUTHOR

J Boykin Baker grew up in the small town of Wilson, North Carolina. She knew from the age of seven, after seeing the old movie “Pillow Talk,” that the only career for her was interior design. After college, marriage, and babies, her dream of being an interior designer came true with the start of her own design firm in Atlanta, Georgia. As timing would have it, she just happened to be in the right place - at the right time - with the right look and ended up designing hospitals, corporate offices, and high-end residential projects across the nation.

During her years as President of Baker Interiors, Inc. she had the privilege of working with countless women. Due to a caring nature, she was led to mentor young women through familiar struggles of a reoccurring nature. Eventually, she carried her love for women and children even further when she founded a non-profit, Widow’s Mite Experience, Inc., to provide emergency water relief for families in the United States and around the world. With the help of hundreds of women volunteers, this ministry is now active in 32 countries.

Her writing career began with a series of children’s books illustrating the unusual travels of a doll named Mary Margaret. She has written two pilots about antics of Southern women and how to design with the mystique of Southern comfort, and has had various interiors and commentaries published in slick-cover magazines from coast to coast. Under duress, she has even written two professional manuals. She has now published 3 books in the By Design trilogy that she hopes will have cross-over appeal to women of all ages who are experiencing, or remembering, the intensity of a new love.

With humor, tears, and professional insight, she enjoys sharing her wide-ranging experiences on national television, radio interviews, and speaking internationally. She was recently named one of North Carolina’s Women of Achievement by the GFWC-NC. In a nutshell, this author continues to thoroughly enjoy a full and adventurous life!



PITCH

Having led Baker Interiors and Widow's Mite Experience, I have been privileged to employ and volunteer with countless young women. I have noticed a very distinct difference between those who are confident, committed, and make plans with those who settle for the moment regardless of the consequence. My goal with the *By Design* trilogy is that a premise set forth in the first book will serve as a template to both encourage and subtly teach women in understanding they can control their destinies. I felt beginning with a contemporary romance, showcasing a young, professional couple facing today's challenges could tell this story in a more meaningful manner. As the trilogy follows their journey in the second and third books, I believe their voices give courage for the pursuit of dreams and a better tomorrow.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Author and Interior Designer J Boykin Baker Releases the third and final book in the By Design Trilogy, *By Design 3: A Life Well Lived*, to join her first novel, *By Design: A Love story with a Twist* and her second novel, *By Design 2: Matters of the Heart*.

ATLANTA, Dec. 28, 2019 – J. Boykin Baker’s “By Design” trilogy (<https://www.jboykinbaker.com>) is a series written to both entertain and help encourage women to take control of their destinies. A love story with a twist, Baker’s work is informed by her own real experiences working closely with confident, professional women.

“By Design” is a contemporary romance involving a young, professional couple and is set in the thriving city of Atlanta. A sweeping allegory for the modern woman, the 3 novels take you on a journey of an emotional romance guaranteed to touch the heart of anyone who has experienced the exhilarating intensity of a new love.

Synopsis: Anne is a young, Southern professional with just the right connections and a privileged point of view. Confident in her innate value, she has complete faith in her power to control her own future. After all, even with the challenges that come with working at a high-profile interior design firm, located in the heart of Atlanta, she knows exactly where she’s headed. What she doesn’t expect is Dr. Brad Young, Jr. and the commitment and complications that follow.

J. Boykin Baker began her professional life as an interior designer, and quickly achieved success leading her own firm. In addition to writing and designing, Ms. Baker works with various nonprofit charities. In line with her nonprofit interests, Ms. Baker has promised to donate 30 percent of author profits from the books to Orphan’s Promise <https://www.orphanpromise.org/>, which provides comprehensive help to orphans across the globe.

Reviews for “By Design” are already overwhelmingly positive:

“An enjoyable story of both friendship and love. The descriptive details speak to both physical and emotional senses. Recommended to all who could use a 'feel good read' and a reminder that authenticity and kindness really do matter. It's easy to know and love the characters!” — Patricia L., Amazon.com review

“By Design” is now available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and [Barnes and Noble](https://www.barnesandnoble.com).

Follow “By Design” on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/jboykinbaker).
Follow “By Design” on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/jboykinbaker).

About J Boykin Baker

J Boykin Baker is an Atlanta-based interior designer, author and founder of the nonprofit Widow's Mite Experience, Inc. which provides emergency water relief for families in both the United States and abroad. Ms. Baker began her writing career with a series of children's books illustrating the unusual travels of a doll named Mary Margaret. She has also written two pilots, various magazine interiors and commentaries, as well as nonfiction. The "By Design" series are her first novels. Writing about "The South" comes easily for Ms. Baker as she grew up in the charming town of Wilson, NC, attended college in Richmond, VA, and spent her design career in the dynamic city of Atlanta GA for over 30 years before coming back home to the southern beaches of North Carolina. Learn more at: www.JBoykinBaker.com.

SELL SHEET

BY DESIGN I



By Design: A Love Story with a Twist

ISBN: 9781072364894

PAGE COUNT: 380

COPYRIGHT DATE: 2018

GENRE: Contemporary Women's Fiction

SYNOPSIS:

Anne Boyd is a young, Southern professional with just the right connections and a privileged point of view. Confident in her innate value, she has complete faith in her power to control her own future. After all, even with the challenges that come with working at a high-profile interior design firm located in the heart of Atlanta, she knows exactly where she's headed. What she doesn't expect is Dr. Brad Young, Jr.

Sparks immediately fly between the handsome young doctor and Anne when she's assigned to troubleshoot for his surgical practice, but chemistry can only get you so far. As their relationship develops, so too does a burgeoning conflict and confusion over the uncommon roles their mothers play in their lives. Over the course of an emotional weekend and the exposure of a secret lurking in his past, Brad is forced to make a life-changing adjustment as Anne discovers the devastating betrayal of a trusted plan.

By Design I: A Love Story with a Twist is an emotional romance guaranteed to touch the heart of anyone who has experienced the breathtaking intensity of a new love.

ALL THE RAVES:

“Already waiting for the second, third, etc. books to come! I love your writing!”

—Jade, Postgraduate student

“A friend suggested this book to me. I usually prefer nonfiction, but I was captivated. I read it in just a couple sittings. It reminded me of *The Notebook*. The romance was beautifully developed, and the story line was fast paced. The author clearly has expertise in interior decorating, because there was some sharply-observed detail in the description. Highly recommend! And there's a sequel coming, too...”

—Lina, Amazon (5 stars)

“I absolutely love this book! The story line was wonderfully written with so much love. What her mother did for her was positively amazing!”

—Tamela C., Amazon (5 stars)

“*By Design* is a fun book. You cry, laugh and have all the feels you need. The characters are easy to identify with. Looking forward to reading more from Ms. Baker.”

—T. Patterson, Amazon (5 stars)

“I loved it so much I just finished reading it for the second time. I was Anne's age when I lived in Atlanta, the details in this story are amazing. Anne & Brad show us how our lives can have many detours. It is how we handle these detours that bring us to our destiny. Development of character, love, trust, forgiveness, determination, commitment. This is a feel good story that can be enjoyed by all ages. I can't wait for the next one.”

—T. Leonard, Amazon (5 stars)

“This is a must read! I couldn't put the book down so be prepared. When you start to read it you say to yourself ...just a few more pages and before you know it you want to read the next book! We read this book for our book club and we had some healthy discussions on multiple topics. I can't wait to read the next book and look forward to it being produced as a movie as it has a great story line.”

—J. F. Prescott, Amazon (5 stars)

“Love, love, love this book! Great read for anyone, but especially young people trying to navigate today's world. Enjoyed every minute!”

—Tracy Coleman, Amazon (5 stars)

“J Boykin Baker has written a novel that is more phenomenal than I can put into words. *By Design* is an amazing book that not only captures the trials of real life, it holds fast to truths that have been written in most of our hearts.”

—Elizabeth L., Amazon (5 stars)

BY DESIGN II



By Design II: Matters of the Heart

ISBN: 9781076035769

PAGE COUNT: 358

COPYRIGHT DATE: 2019

GENRE: Contemporary Women's Fiction

SYNOPSIS:

Anne and Brad's love for one another continues to blossom in *By Design II*. The young Southern designer inspires a depth of new emotions in the handsome doctor as he finds her love for everyone in her path a magnetic force he cannot resist. But . . . can he overcome his frustrations with her independent ways? Anne on the other hand, finds Brad's loving attentions and boyish Southern charm irresistible as she takes on the challenge of his somewhat spoiled nature. One has to ask . . . will their life together withstand professional demands, daily challenges and the possibility of trust issues as they see their worlds so differently?

By Design II: Matters of the Heart will resonate soundly with the majority of readers who find it challenging to balance life in the turmoil of our modern culture. But take heart, it may just be possible!

ALL THE RAVES:

“What? It’s over? However, my emotions were spent! What a precious story of love and family!
—J. Vaughan, Worldwide Organizational Volunteer

“Wouldn’t miss book 3 of this story for anything! Love Brad, Anne and their brood!
—Cindy H., avid reader

“I thoroughly enjoyed reading your second wonderful book! A well-written page turner. You go Author J.!
—Karen M., Banking professional

“I have had the privilege of listening to numerous readings by the Author and she is one incredible lady and writer! The way she weaves a story with the characters and dialogue is very authentic and engaging. And her description is amazing! If this is your genre, you will not be disappointed. Even if it isn't, you will still find yourself captivated and hooked by this series' eloquence and charm. A truly inspiring, professional, and beautifully written novel that you won't be able to put down. Nicely done! 5 Stars!!!!”
—Randall Lane, Author of *Devil's Den*

“In a frantic world where people are too busy and often distant, it’s lovely to “come home” to Brad and Anne. They are genuine people, with real struggles that they refuse to allow to overwhelm them. As you turn the pages, you’ll find yourself wanting to spend more time with the Youngs as *By Design II* is an encouraging read. This book pulls you aside from your daily routine and puts you into a truly heartwarming, loving family. Come on in! They’ve left the light on for you!”
—Suzanne Roberts, Women’s mentor and author of *Power Up*

“*By Design II* satisfies and inspires as it continues the story of a young couple, Brad and Anne Young and the unexpected twists and turns of their commitment to each other, their family and their community. This sequel reveals a refreshing and enjoyable sense of purpose as you follow along on their journey with laughter and a few tears. I loved *By Design* and didn’t think a sequel could get any better, but it did! I love, love, love *By Design II*. J Boykin Baker is truly a gifted writer.”
—T. Leonard, Coastal Printing

“*By Design II* is timely, delightful, wholesome, and a great read! You will not want it to end. Looking forward to the last novel of the affecting and inspiring trilogy. I want more, ya’ll!”
—G. Cassese, a New Yorker that moved to the South!

BY DESIGN III



By Design III: A Life Well Lived

ISBN: 9781676839040

PAGE COUNT: 352

COPYRIGHT DATE: 2019

GENRE: Contemporary Women's Fiction

SYNOPSIS:

The third novel and last novel of the *By Design* trilogy continues the journey of Anne and Brad as they make their way through the many complications, heartaches, and joys of life. Inevitably, they begin to think of their own mortality as the years move forward. Anne thinks of her mother a lot these days. Even though Gretchen's life had ended way too soon, she had managed to prepare her daughter well—she left a legacy to be envied. Now, after so many years, that legacy has the daunting task of seeing Anne through. Will life be gentle with Anne? Or will it present a costly bill? Her mother's promise from so long ago may be her only hope.

ALL THE RAVES:

“A confident young woman, a strong family, an emotional story, a forever classic in the making. Mrs. Baker is quite the storyteller!”

—Liz T., a Southern bookworm from Birmingham

“Amazing. I absolutely love your book!”

—Goodreads review (5 stars)

“Wow . . . and just like that I have finished the book. J Boykin Baker, it was amazing!!! You are my favorite author.”

—E. Thomas Lewis

“A page turner, reminds me of *The Notebook*.”

—Amazon review (5 stars)

“Sweet confirmation of *By Design I and II*. Ms. Baker has a knack for bringing a delightful flare to her novels. Most enjoyable.”

—Marion N., a Northern transplant to the South

“A romance is not my normal genre. However, the *By Design* trilogy is an exception. These books will cause you to fall in love all over again.”

—Alton B., A Huge Fan

“By Design 3 is the culmination of a love story trilogy of the ups and downs of a life well lived by a family who used the family matriarch's 3 step plan to guide their decisions regarding their futures. Their belief is that how to tackle the choices one makes, while growing old, should be studied to produce the best possible outcome for the future or one's destiny, one's eternity. How basic, and how simple to use the three steps for wholesome living seeking Godly council. There are so many wonderful down home, generous, loving characters you will fall in love with that makes this book a quick page turner; however, the one you will love the most at the end is the author.

Great adventure, examples of great parenting, examples of the best in generational parenting, and examples of loving friendships are all designed to tell this story about love, living life helping others, and claiming a life well lived.

Start reading this trilogy today!”

—Wendy, Amazon (5 stars)

TRILOGY INFORMATION:

Amazon Books:

By Design I: https://www.amazon.com/Design-J-Boykin-Baker/dp/1947309285/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&keywords=9781947309289&qid=1531756635&s=books&sr=1-1

By Design II: https://www.amazon.com/Design-2-Matters-Heart/dp/1076035760/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

By Design III: https://www.amazon.com/Design-Life-Well-Lived/dp/1676839046/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1582514525&sr=1-1

Audio Books

By Design I: https://www.amazon.com/By-Design/dp/B07YCRB218/ref=tmm_aud_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1531756635&sr=1-1

By Design II: https://www.amazon.com/Design-2-Matters-Heart/dp/B0821NZKNT/ref=tmm_aud_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=

By Design III: https://www.amazon.com/Design-Life-Well-Lived/dp/B083V8Q7QY/ref=tmm_aud_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1582514525&sr=1-1

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\$15.99 paperback

\$17.46 audio

\$1.99-\$3.99 kindle

Available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and your favorite bookstore

View *By Design* Trailer here: <https://youtu.be/dntnGEWEO3I>



BOOK EXCERPT

I have included Gretchen's plan below simply because it is so integral to all three books. This introduction will provide a glimpse as to the importance of the maternal holds and sacred promises that stand at the core of Anne and Brad's relationship. This plan inspires and strengthens their faith as the Youngs navigate life's exciting, yet complicated journey.

GRETCHEN'S PLAN:

Gretchen Boyd had a wonderful life. She was blessed with a successful and loving husband, a sweet and beautiful teenage daughter, supportive family and friends, but most importantly, she had her faith, which she was counting on to serve her well. Gretchen was fun-loving and adventurous in such creative ways. She had always embraced life to its fullest. But now she was sick and her life was changing.

A virulent form of cancer was invading her body and, barring a miracle, it would most likely take her life. It was a devastating diagnosis for herself, but her worst fears were for her only child, Anne. How would her precious fourteen-year-old daughter navigate her future, all of life's decisions, without a mother to guide her? Sadness flooded her thoughts as she visualized each of the special moments in Anne's future that she would probably miss. Choking up, she imagined graduation, her prom, her first boyfriend, her first job . . . her wedding. These thoughts were way too painful; she shifted her attention to her husband.

Edward was a good daddy and he was crazy about Anne, but his work was demanding. There were nights before a court case that he didn't get home until close to midnight. Who would be there for Anne to help her with schoolwork and take her to activities? Who would hold her as

she poured her heart out when she'd had a bad day? Who would be there to keep her from being lonely and sad when she'd walk into an empty house?

Gretchen looked at her watch. It was time for her medicine. The pain seemed to be increasing daily, and she needed to get it under control before Anne came rushing in from play practice. She swallowed the capsule with a drink of iced tea. Stepping out of her shoes, she pulled the covers back on her bed and lay down, trying to get comfortable as she winced and waited for the pill to do its job. The thought of her situation was now all too real. Tears flooded her eyes as she began to make a mental list of her family's future needs.

By the end of the next week, Gretchen had hired Ruby Wheeler, a jovial, kind, and experienced housekeeper who could work full time and even stay late when necessary. Ruby had known Anne since she was five from the years she had worked as part nanny, part housekeeper for one of Edward's cousins. She was to start in two weeks so that Anne and Edward could get accustomed to her, and Ruby could get familiar with their lifestyle and schedules.

Next, Gretchen insisted Edward take a day off. She needed to discuss his responsibilities concerning their daughter, things he would not naturally think to do. Through their tears she had gotten a solemn promise that he understood and would always put their daughter's needs above everything.

Then, she interviewed Ruth Kelly, a well-respected grief counselor. After several hours of discussing her medical situation and concerns for Anne and her husband, Gretchen was comfortable with her choice. That night Gretchen gently presented Ruth's card to Edward. She gave him a kiss and told him to put the card where he could easily find it when the time came. Edward looked at the card, back at his wife, and took her in his arms. Not another word was said.

The days passed, and as Gretchen's condition grew worse, all she could think about were the decisions that Anne might face. One afternoon she walked to the back door, turned to a board with old painted hooks, and reached for her tan sweater. She smiled remembering knitting that sweater when she was expecting Anne. It seemed such a short time ago, but Anne was already a budding teenager. Continuing to the porch, she sat down in a rocking chair. It was a startlingly clear autumn day, blue skies overhead, and the leaves were starting to change. The kind of day that makes you want to live forever, but then, no one does. Gretchen held her hands up and turned them slowly; how frail and helpless she felt at just forty years of age. In the last few weeks, she could actually feel herself slipping away. She began to pray.

"Dear God, please give me wisdom and clarity for a plan that will honor you and help my sweet girl in times to come. I know you'll be with her, Lord, and that is such comfort, but please help me leave a legacy that will stand in my stead." While she prayed, her mind began to fill with ideas for guiding Anne on her journey to womanhood.

As she reviewed her thoughts, Gretchen was clear that the design for this plan had to fit any needs or questions that might arise, and it had to equip her daughter to make wise choices concerning subjects as broad as friends, finances, college, and eventually the possibility of marriage. The plan had to be profound, yet simple, so that Anne could recall its steps at a moment's notice. Gretchen searched her memory for past situations the two had tackled. One immediately came to mind.

Years earlier, Gretchen had watched Anne struggle with her allowance, usually coming up short with days to go. She smiled as she remembered the distress her daughter experienced

when she had no money left for a movie with her friends. One afternoon when Anne was throwing a tantrum over this very subject and was begging for an advance “just this one last time,” mother and daughter sat down on the bed in Anne’s room. With some thought, even an argument or two, they developed a system they named the “Three S’s,” a plan to assist in controlling Anne’s spending and temper when things didn’t go her way.

Going forward, Anne would divide her allowance into three jars. She could wisely spend the eighty percent in the first jar, save ten percent for emergencies in the second, and still have ten percent remaining in the third to share with children in need or church projects. It took a little time for Anne to get the system down pat, but in the end, a more successful money management process developed. Gretchen nodded as her thoughts began to give birth to a new three-step plan, but this plan would be a guide for Anne’s life journey.

She opened the small drawer to her nightstand and picked up a bright floral journal, a treasured Mother’s Day gift from Anne. She opened the book to the inscription on the first page: “To the most wonderful mother in the whole wide world, I love you sooo much!!!” Tears filled her eyes. She took a tissue out of her pocket and sat down at Edward’s desk. She picked up a pen, turned to a fresh page, dabbed her eyes, and began to write.

A design for the new plan seemed to flow. The first step of the plan would start with Anne identifying her desire or concern regarding a specific issue. With the issue identified, whether it was friends, money, career-direction, or more, the second step would be an evaluation of possible choices or decisions. In the third step, Anne would need to consider how her selected choice would affect the outcome of her intended goal or destiny.

Gretchen knew this three-step plan was not as simple as it sounded. There would likely be struggles and heartbreak along the way, as some choices could be painful. But that pain would

be nothing compared to the consequences of Anne being untrue to what she knew was right in her heart. Ignoring her conscience and making compromises could prevent attaining her goal or realizing her greatest destiny.

Feeling tired, Gretchen moved to her bed. Removing her shoes, she tugged at a small woolen throw to lay it over her feet and settled back against the comfort of her pillows. It was time to mentally test her plan. Gretchen smiled as a thought began to materialize. She could use an imaginary scenario concerning friendship. Suppose Anne was introduced to a new friend, but soon found this friend was using cheat sheets on algebra tests. Not only that, her friend would ask to copy Anne's homework. Would Anne value the friendship so much that she would take a chance of her friend's bad habits getting her in trouble? Or would she make the difficult choice to kindly discontinue the friendship and avoid possibly being labeled as dishonest? A label like that could undermine the trust of her teachers, cause suspicion regarding test scores, possibly limit college choices due to lukewarm recommendations, and jeopardize her long-standing desire of becoming an interior designer. Gretchen smiled. *It works!* Her plan was complete. It all basically came down to three questions.

First, what desire or concern came into play?

Second, what choice and commitment were required to stay true to herself?

Third, how could that choice and commitment affect her goal or destiny?

All was ready to begin discussions with her daughter.

About a week later, Ruby had a church meeting, Edward was going to be working late, and the perfect opportunity presented itself. Journal in hand, Gretchen called Anne into her bedroom and patted for her to come snuggle and chat for a little while. It was their normal

custom in the late afternoon before dinner and homework. They settled in as Gretchen shared the “new friend scenario.” She felt it was a good way to illustrate her train of thought as she introduced her plan.

“Now, let’s talk about money. What is your future desire concerning your finances, sweetheart?”

Anne turned over and rested her face in her hands as she thought and finally said, “Money is not a big deal to me. I would just like to have a lot, and I don’t want to give out. And remember, I want to give some to help children.”

Gretchen smiled. “So, what kind of choice would it take for you not to give out and to be able to help?”

“Other than asking Daddy if I could have one of his credit cards?” Anne said with a laugh. “I guess a choice to get a job and not spend more than I’m paid.” She laid back and put her head in her mother’s lap.

“And how would a job and living on a budget affect your destiny?” Gretchen continued as she stroked her daughter’s hair.

Anne’s eyes lit up. “I would always have enough to do the Three S’s. I could help children with the sharing part.”

Both smiled as they thought of that earlier lesson. Mother and daughter continued to examine various choices and consequences with school work, activities, colleges, and more.

Yet Gretchen had designed her plan to include an even more serious conversation. She took a breath. “Now, let’s talk about boys.”

“M-o-t-h-e-r, I really don’t have that desire. I hope you’re not going to talk about sex stuff . . . that’s gross.” A flushed rosy glow began at Anne’s neck and spread to her cheeks.

Gretchen smiled at her daughter's familiar blush. "But you will have that desire. It may not be important to you now, but take my word, sooner than you know it's going to become important. You will be very attractive to the young men you meet."

"Mother, can we get a glass of tea? I need a snack or something."

Anne wasn't thirsty or hungry, but she was beginning to understand her mother's purpose for the plan and her eyes filled with tears. She wiped her face as tears spilled and angrily turned to her mother. "I don't want to learn all of this stuff. I want you to be here to help me. I don't want to grow up without you!"

Gretchen took Anne's hand. "I know."

She tenderly wrapped her arms around her daughter. Anne settled back against the soft pillows and the two snuggled in silence until there were no more tears.

Gretchen gently restarted the conversation and whispered, "We'll have a glass of tea a little later. Let's think this through."

She knew the discussion was difficult for Anne and took it slowly, but she needed to persist. "Suppose you're out with a young man and he starts making sexual advances that seem rather exciting . . . you'll have a choice to make. Will you want a trial run or will you save that part of yourself for the man you marry? The choice to wait will require a serious commitment and, trust me, it will not be easy. Making love is a beautiful part of a committed relationship, but can have painful consequences outside of marriage. Painful breakups, health issues, unplanned pregnancies, and sadly, even the pressure of an abortion. The choice not to wait could seriously affect your destiny."

"M-o-m-m-a, all of this seems a million years away."

Still, as they talked, Anne could tell how important their conversation was to her mother and reluctantly decided to listen as she rubbed the back of her mother's hand on her cheek.

"It does right now, sweetheart, but you'll need to be committed to your choice before you face a crisis in the heat of the moment. I pray that you will carefully think through how your decision could affect your life. Always remember, sweetheart, make your decisions knowing that your worth is invaluable."

Gretchen fluffed her pillows and sat up a little straighter. "Let me tell you a couple of stories to help you better understand. One of my friends had a strong desire to care for children. She and her husband had two biological children and adopted three others. Several years later, she learned of three young sisters who desperately needed a home. She was faced with two choices. Would she raise her existing family just as it was, or would she adopt the young girls, and nurture them as well? Not an easy decision. How would the addition of three more children affect her home and family life? After much thought and prayer, she made the choice to follow her heart and adopted the sisters. Today, because of that heartfelt choice, her destiny has mushroomed into a ministry for orphans. That one unselfish choice has improved the lives of thousands of children.

"Now, let me tell you about another friend who because of insecurities had a basic desire to ensure the happiness of others, even at the expense of her own. Because she wanted to please, she chose to give in to a young man's fleeting satisfaction, and with that choice, her life evolved into an unwanted pregnancy and a desperate abortion. Deserted by both the father and her parents, and filled with guilt, that unfortunate choice directed her life down a sad and negative path. Thankfully, with prayer, she was able to forgive herself, and even wrote a book, *Heavenly Appointments*. A sweet story aimed at helping other young women come to terms with guilt and

embrace forgiveness. Even though it took time, better choices have her back on track for a more positive destiny with a wonderful husband and three beautiful children.”

Gretchen looked intently into her daughter’s eyes. “Anne, as hard as you try to make the very best choices, there may be times when you will make a mistake. Just remember, you can go back to the plan by making better choices. You have the power to choose again, follow your heart, and move your destiny in a better direction.”

Gretchen paused. “But, my sweet girl, even with God’s grace, because of His love for us, there are consequences when we’re disobedient and don’t follow our hearts. Those consequences can cause a delay or disruption in His best plan for us. My prayer for you, my sweet girl, is that your goals and desires will be so meaningful that you will seek strength and wisdom to make the best choices. And that those choices will allow God to give you the desires of your heart as He reveals His perfect destiny for your precious life.”

Thirteen years later . . .

Anne smiled through tears as she reflected on her mother’s careful design for her future, and for the most part the plan had worked beautifully. Sure, she had made the typical mistakes, but nothing serious. It only took once to realize that bouncing a check, confiding in a gossip, or drinking more than two beers were bad ideas. So . . . nothing major.

In fact, the plan had been working for all the important choices in her life until Anne gazed into the dark brown eyes of Bradford Young.

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AUTHOR'S BLOG

Greetings,

My name is J Boykin Baker, and I'd like to tell you how this first novel, which would eventually become a trilogy came into being. If you knew me and my busy nature, you'd probably wonder how a woman who can't stand to sit still long enough to get my nails done managed to sit still long enough to write a book. Well, to be honest, that was pretty much a miracle.

Beginning many years ago and culminating just recently, I learned the difficult lesson that timing truly is everything. This revelation all began with a nudge. Not an earthshaking nudge, but more of a small tap. At first I ignored it, but it continued to hang out around every corner. It was just sort of a nagging—an aggravation. You know, kind of like knowing that you need to move the clothes from the washing machine to the dryer, or that you need to return a call, or clean out a closet. In hindsight, those would have been easy tasks compared to what I was experiencing. I was being gently nudged to, of all things, write a book. And the weirdest part of this whole experience was that I already knew the name of this book. It was to be titled *By Design*. Probably having a little too much confidence for my own good, I took out paper and pen, then sat down to write the next *Gone with the Wind*. I pressed the pen onto the paper, now ready to begin my masterpiece. Not one single sentence came to mind. Nothing encouraged that pen to move one little bit. I stood, crammed my pink notebook into an already bulging drawer, and continued with my busy life as a wife and young mother.

As time passed, there proved to be no escape from this pushy feeling. In fact, for years I felt as if the shadow of that book was following me everywhere. By now, I had founded and was serving as president of an interior design firm in Atlanta. One rainy afternoon as I was leaving my office, I slipped into my car and the nudge hit again. It felt stronger this time, although still not earthshaking. But the tap was now plural and more urgent. Again, I took out that rather dog-eared pink notebook and sat down on my bed with my legs crossed and declared, “By George, I’m ready.” I wrote two sentences, neither of which were even coherent. I stuffed that stupid notebook back into that overloaded drawer and asked myself, “Write a book! What am I thinking?”

Years continued to pass. Upon my retirement from the design firm, I attended a ministry conference. There, I heard a report on the desperate plight of women and their families who were dying daily because of no access to clean water. The accompanying photos broke my heart and I soon found myself volunteering as president of a non-profit ministry that took clean water to the nations. But that pesky nudge continued with its ebbs and flows. It was now becoming an earthshaking disturbance with a pulsing urgency. I once again removed the battered pink notebook; this time the fog began to clear.

When I sat down at my desk, it was if a light bulb came on. During years with my family, the interior design industry, and a water ministry, I was privileged to know, employ and volunteer with countless women of all ages. I had noticed a distinct contrast between those, who for the most part, made uncompromising decisions, versus those who settled for the moment regardless of any consequences. I couldn't help but wonder what made the difference.

I struggled with this question to the point that I began to feel my supernatural nudge shout, “Quit wondering and start writing.” It was now time to write my book, *By Design*, and I understood the subject matter which I was to address. I was to write a book that would cheer women on as they came to understand their innate value. I was to do this by exploring life’s ups and downs through the intensity of a new love. Again, I put pen to paper . . . a story flowed. I finally had to resort to dictating the words in order to keep up. As word after word appeared on paper, I felt as if I was being directed by two distinct thoughts. The first, I was not to be ‘preachy’ and the second, I was to allow this story to be honest; to be real about the pressures and passions that are part of falling in love. Yet, I also knew that I was to lovingly, but seriously offer the strength of a moral compass that so many times our culture seems to have forgotten. As the words continued, almost immediately, a 3-step plan developed in the novel’s introduction. This plan was a gift to Anne, our heroine, from her mother, Gretchen. It was to serve as a template to encourage and subtly teach her daughter that there is a logical way to direct one’s destiny. Her mother knew, all too soon, Anne would be ‘out there’ by herself and would need guidance as she maneuvered each aspect of the certain pitfalls. But could Anne embrace this plan, and if so, how? That question and all that ensued, drove this story in mysterious and intriguing ways that I could have never imagined. You see, I was following step by step as a journey unfolded between Anne and this new man in her life.

As you read, my hope is that this contemporary romance between a young, professional couple will reveal a story in a more meaningful way as the two navigate their complicated past and uncertain future through laughter, frustrations, tears, and a unique twist.

By Design is the first book of a trilogy which now includes *By Design 2* and *By Design 3*. May these three novels prove worthy of your curling up hours. Just for fun, I added a few recipes from the book’s southern food favorites and discussion questions to encourage your thoughts as you experience or remember the intensity of a new love.

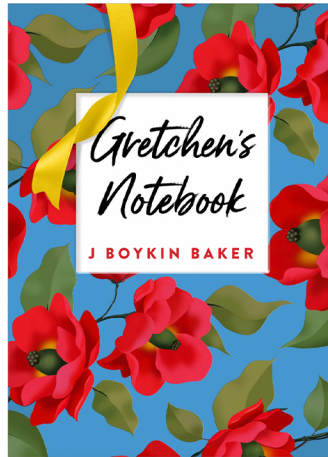
Wishing you warm memories,

J Boykin Baker

P.S. Would love to hear from you! See: Comments and Reviews, Amazon links, and book trailer at <https://www.jboykinbaker.com>



ADDITIONAL PHOTOS



J Boykin Baker signing books at the Orphan Promise's 15th Anniversary Event

