

# ***Memories Light the Corners of My Mind***

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## ***1. Baby Books***

### ***Sept. 1972***

Trixie Belden and her two best friends burst into the Beldens' cozy farmhouse after disembarking the school bus on a brisk fall afternoon. The three sixteen-year-olds were chattering excitedly about the upcoming Fall Festival being held at Sleepyside Junior-Senior High School in a few weeks' time.

“Moms - Gleeps, what are you doing?” exclaimed Trixie. Her blue eyes were round with amazement as she gazed at the array of photographs, wallpaper samples, calligraphy pens, and photo mounts which covered the kitchen table. Her mother sat at the table arranging several snapshots on a page of wallpaper sample.

“I've been working on a scrapbook for Brian - I'd like to get it done before his birthday next month,” said Mrs. Belden. “Now that he's out of high school, I'll probably never see any of his work or be present if he wins an award. So I wanted to put his high school papers, pictures, and awards into a memory book. I hope to do the same for Mart as well as you and Bobby eventually. Margaret Lynch and I attended a class on making scrapbooks and we both thought it would be fun.”

Trixie moved a stack of books in from one of the kitchen chairs to the table so that she could sit and look more closely at what her mother was doing. “Why, these look like baby books! Whose are they?”

Mrs. Belden sighed. “Those are yours and your brothers'. You may look at them if you wish, but they need a lot of work. Take them into the living room if you'd like to look at them, so those pictures don't get mixed up with these.”

“Yes, let's take them in the living room. I'd love to see pictures of you, Mart and Brian when you were babies,” Honey suggested. “Then

we'll be out of your mother's way."

"OK," Trixie agreed, grinning at her friend. She suspected that Honey only wanted a chance to look at Brian's baby pictures. Honey had been attracted to Brian for two years now, and the two had recently begun dating. Honey blushed as she guessed the direction of Trixie's thoughts, and they both turned to look at Diana, who was the steady girlfriend of Trixie's other brother, Mart. "Do you want to look at our baby books, Di?" Trixie asked, waggling her brows at her black-haired friend.

"Sure, why not?" was Diana's response, and although she strove for a casual tone, her face was also red.

The three girls spent the next fifteen minutes paging through the four baby books. Brian's was the only one which was anywhere near complete. Almost all the information was filled in up until his third birthday, and there were a number of pictures, as well as a lock of black hair from his first haircut. Mart's and Trixie's books had a number of scraps of paper laid in between the pages, with dates, weights, and lengths recorded; there were quite a few snapshots and even a tiny envelope in each with a blond curl, but very few pages had any writing past the initial birth records. Bobby's book was even skimpierPage: 2  
, with fewer completed pages and much less information.

"Just another example of Brian being the favorite!" Trixie said, in what she hoped was a joking tone.

"Trixie, my mother kept a baby book for me, and you should see it! Since I was an only child for such a long time, she could record every detail of my life. There are several studio portraits of me, too. But once the twins were born, she wasn't able to spend the time keeping their books caught up. If anything, they're less complete than yours, Mart's or Bobby's. Maybe now Mummy will be able to work on their books, since they're all in school now. If she will show me what to do, I know I can help her. That would be a lot of fun!"

"Oh, Di, I'm such a goon!" Trixie moaned. "Of course Moms didn't have time to keep up Mart's and my books - with only eleven

months between us, she spent every minute of the day caring for us and doing laundry! Brian's only about eighteen months older than Mart, so obviously he wasn't any help to her. And when Bobby was born, we were all in school, so there was homework and school activities for us, as well as taking care of a baby."

Honey had been silent up until now. "I'll have to ask Mother if she has a book for me," she finally said. "I don't remember ever seeing one. But with me being the only child, and no housework, laundry, or gardening to do, she would have had time."

The girls took the books back into the kitchen, where they found Mrs. Belden putting away her supplies. "Trixie, my next project will be to complete Mart's and your baby books, but it's time to cook supper now," she said, smiling. "Honey and Diana, I hope you can both stay."

"Thank you, Mrs. Belden," said Diana. "But I promised Mummy I would be home by five o'clock to help her finish cooking supper. Our cook is off on Thursday nights, and each week, we cook a family dinner together. Even the girls help, and it's a lot of fun. Mummy always loved to cook, and she says this keeps her in practice." Diana's violet eyes sparkled as she talked about the time her family spent together.

Several years earlier, Diana's father had used lottery winnings to start a successful business, and their newfound wealth had caused adjustment struggles for Diana as well as her parents. They moved into a huge home and hired a large staff, then fired the lot of them when it seemed that the staff controlled their family rather than the other way around. Eventually, Mrs. Lynch realized she needed some household help; the size of the house and demands of five children created too much work for one person to handle. Since her husband also needed to do a certain amount of entertaining because of his business, it made sense to employ a butler to keep the place running smoothly; a cook to come in on most days; and a cleaning service. But she still loved to cook the delicious family-style meals for which she had been famous. Diana enjoyed helping her mother in the kitchen on the cook's day off, and also loved to spend time with her much-younger twin brothers and sisters.

Honey spoke up. “My parents won’t be back until tomorrow, and I’m sure Miss Trask won’t mind if I stay for supper. May I use your phone?” Even after three years as her best friend, Honey remained rather formal with Trixie’s parents.

After supper, Trixie and Bobby walked Honey back up the path to the Manor House. The two girls chattered all the way, but Trixie sensed that her friend was preoccupied. She wondered what Honey was thinking about.

Trixie had forgotten all about the baby books, but Honey had not. Although she and her mother had grown closer since the Wheelers had moved to Sleepyside, their relationship lacked the easygoing camaraderie her two friends enjoyed with their mothers. She felt she could not rest until she found out if her mother had kept a baby book for her. If so, it would answer the question Honey had secretly worried over: did her mother really love her?

## ***2. Honey Is Surprised***

When Honey arrived home from school the next day, she felt the change in atmosphere that meant her parents had returned. There was a bustle of activity in the formal rooms, and Tom Delanoy, the Wheelers’ chauffeur, carried bag after bag upstairs or to the laundry room. Later Celia would unpack the bags and sort laundry. Honey caught a whiff of her mother’s favorite perfume when she passed by the master bedroom, but the door was closed and Celia had told her that her mother was resting. She did not see either of her parents until they sat down to dinner. Matt Wheeler was in good spirits and talked a great deal about the business that had taken him to Italy, the beauty of the Italian countryside, and the insanity of Italian drivers. Honey’s eyes sparkled as she carried on an animated conversation with her father, but when they turned to her mother, they were questioning and shuttered.

Her mother was very quiet. She toyed with the food on her plate, eating only a few bites, and excused herself as soon as coffee had been served.

As Madeleine Wheeler walked gracefully around to her daughter's chair, she leaned over to give her a cool kiss. "Good night, darling. I'm exhausted and I'm going back upstairs to lie down. Please come in and see me before you go to bed."

Honey stood and kissed her mother in return. "All right, Mother, I will come in. But I won't wake you if you are asleep."

"Oh, I won't be asleep," was her mother's reply.

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Honey closed her book and glanced at her bedside clock, which read 9:30. *I should probably say good night to Mother before it gets much later. Besides -- she tried to swallow the bubble of anticipation -- or was it fear? -- that filled her throat, I need to ask her about the baby book.*

Softly she knocked at her mother's door.

"Come in, dear," her mother's voice replied.

Honey slipped quietly into her parents' luxurious bedroom. Madeleine was lying down with an ice pack to her forehead and a soft woven throw covering her slim form. Her eyes were closed. "Tell me what you and your friends have been doing while Dad and I were gone," she invited, patting the bed beside her.

"Oh, Mother, Trixie's and Diana's moms went to a scrapbooking workshop, and now they are both working on completing their baby books -- that is, their children's baby books. We looked at Trixie's, Brian's, Mart's, and Bobby's books yesterday. Only Brian's had much done. He was a cute little baby! Diana was telling us about hers. I can't wait to see it."

"I'm sure Helen Belden was much too busy raising her children to spend hours keeping up baby books, especially when they are so close together," Madeleine replied, removing the ice bag from her head.

“Um, Mother, I was wondering ... Did you keep a baby book for me? I’ve never seen one.” There. The question was out. Now the ball was in her mother’s court.

Madeleine sat up and stared at her daughter. Honey’s face was averted, and she was looking intently at something on the opposite wall. Her chin trembled slightly, and Madeleine could see a glitter of tears welling up in the lovely hazel eyes that were so like her own. Her own gaze softened. She reached out and put an arm around Honey’s shoulder.

“Yes, darling. I’ll show it to you.” She rose and walked to the elegant armoire which held her most precious keepsakes, and removed a box. Sitting back down on the edge of the bed, she held it out for Honey to see.

Honey took the box and opened it. Inside the box was a baby book - a beautiful cream-colored book with padded moiré-covered boards and an oval portrait opening containing a picture of a smiling baby with wispy honey-colored hair. A lovely gilt script read “Our Baby Girl - Madeleine Grace Wheeler” and Honey’s birth date.

Honey stared at her mother. “But I’ve never seen this. How can it be that I’ve never seen my own baby book?”

Madeleine sighed. “It’s a long story and one that is very painful for me to remember. However, I believe you have a right to know what happened. It’s a little late to start on it tonight, though. If you don’t have other plans, why don’t we get together after supper tomorrow, and I will tell you about it. For tonight, you may take the book to your room and look at it, if you like.”

“All right, Mother,” Honey replied. “I’ll take it tonight and I’ll come straight home from school tomorrow, so I can have all of my homework done before supper.”

### ***3. Anticipation***

The next day, Honey found it difficult to concentrate in school. All

day, her thoughts kept returning to the beautiful, detailed and carefully filled-in book that documented her earliest years. She couldn't stop marveling that she had never seen it before. Why, why, why, had her mother never shown her the book?

Immediately after arriving home from school, she set to work in the library at the Manor House. Homework had never been so mystifying. Every geometry formula was wrong; every sentence in her essay about "The Most Dangerous Game" ended in a preposition.

"Oh, woe! If I can't get this work done, I'll never get to hear Mother's story!" She pulled a lock of honey-colored hair in an attempt to change the direction of her thoughts. Seeing Miss Trask pass by, Honey called out, "Miss Trask, will you please help me with this homework? I can't seem to concentrate today, and nothing is coming out right!"

"Certainly, dear," replied the energetic woman who had come to the Manor House as Honey's governess, and now oversaw the smooth running of the Wheeler estate. Her blue eyes twinkled as she looked fondly at her erstwhile charge. Honey was a lovely, kind girl who would make any parent proud, and Margery Trask knew the Wheelers were proud of their daughter. She often wished she could find some way to help Honey and her mother to develop a closer relationship.

The two worked steadily for another hour, until Honey declared that every assignment had been completed. More importantly, she understood what she had done. "Miss Trask, you're the most perfectly perfect tutor anyone could have!" she exclaimed. "I am so lucky you agreed to come here!"

"Your parents love you very much, my dear. I'm happy they thought I would be useful to you. I'm glad I came, too." She gave the young girl a spontaneous hug.

Honey did not see her mother pass by the open door of the library. Madeleine glanced inside, but turned away when she saw Honey embracing Miss Trask.

At the dinner table, Honey found that she again felt almost too

excited to eat. Her mother looked better today and exerted herself to ask Honey about her day. She also shared a letter from Jim, Honey's adopted brother, who was a sophomore at Harvard. As Madeleine read from Jim's letter, Honey heard a note of animation in her voice that she rarely noticed. Although she enjoyed the letter and laughed at several of Jim's anecdotes, she began, once again, to feel like an outsider from her mother's perspective.

Finishing the letter, Madeleine looked straight at Honey, and said, "Darling, I'm ready as soon as you want to come to my room for our talk. Matthew" she turned to her husband "I promised Honey I'd go through her baby book with her tonight." Her lovely hazel eyes, exactly like her daughter's, were bright.

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"Come in, dear," Madeleine called in answer to Honey's knock on her door twenty minutes later. Honey carried the lovely keepsake book under her arm as she walked over to the elegant sitting area of her parents' bedroom suite, which held a comfortable armchair and a chaise lounge, with a small table between them. The table held a carafe of water and two small glasses. When Honey started to sit down on the chair opposite her mother, Madeleine patted the comfortable chaise she occupied and beckoned for her daughter to sit with her. A floor lamp cast a bright circle of light in the room, otherwise dimmed in the evening twilight.

"Honey, you know that I was very ill just after you were born, and that was the reason we never had more children. I think what really happened has had a huge influence on our relationship -- or lack of relationship. You are growing up now and you have a right to know about that time." Madeleine's face took on a sad, but dreamy expression as she recounted her story.

"Your father and I were married a month after I graduated from college. He was already becoming established in business and was profiled in Forbes Magazine and the Wall Street Journal. I had my degree in Romance languages and art history, but I only wanted to start a family. We both wanted to have several children. We knew we could afford to give them every advantage and I enjoyed being around

little Benjamin, even though your dad and I privately thought he was terribly spoiled by his parents!” Amazingly to Honey, her mother giggled over this revelation and her eyes sparkled.

“We didn’t really mean to have a baby immediately, but I was still overjoyed to learn that I was pregnant just six months after our wedding. We joked that it was the best Christmas present we could have received. I was tired and had some morning sickness, but after the first couple of months I really felt good. I threw myself into learning about pregnancy, infant care, even breastfeeding. Although bottle-feeding was all the rage - so scientific, you know - I read that the mother’s milk provided the perfect nutrition for a human baby. Cow’s milk was for calves! Your father and I walked every day, and I spent hours with a decorator and a seamstress, designing my nursery and choosing the fabric and style for the curtains and bedding. Ben’s mother, my sister Natalie, even helped me find classes on infant care, even though your grandmother thought it was ridiculous for me to learn to care for my own child. She said a trained nurse would be much better and I wouldn’t be tied down to a child, as Natalie was.” Madeleine’s voice trembled at this last sentence and she paused to take a sip of water.

Honey glanced at her mother, and saw that her eyes were very bright; her slender hand clenched a handkerchief in her lap. She reached out to touch Madeleine’s arm with her own hand. Madeleine pressed her other hand to her lips for a moment, then took a deep breath and continued.

“My labor pains started early in the morning on a hot July day; in fact, they woke me up. My doctor had told me to wait until they were five minutes apart and lasting for about a minute. It didn’t take long for them to get that close, and we called a taxi to take us to the hospital. When we got there at about nine o’clock, I was taken to the labor hall, and your father was sent to the Father’s Waiting Room. I had known he wouldn’t be with me, but still I was frightened to be facing this without him. The last thing I remember is the nurse telling me not to worry, and giving me a shot to ease the pain.”

#### ***4. An Adverse Event***

***July 11, 1956***

Everything seemed fine until Maddie had been in labor for several hours. She had been given Twilight Sleep, a medication that put her into a groggy state in which she could tolerate the strong contractions of labor. It also provided amnesia for the experience, which nearly everyone agreed was a good thing. The drawback to Twilight Sleep was that the laboring woman needed very close observation, because in this groggy state, she could easily fall out of the labor bed and injure herself. She also wouldn't be alert enough to call for help.

Matthew Wheeler was in the Father's Waiting Room, as usual for the expectant father. He paced back and forth with four other fathers during a day that was actually a slow, quiet day in the labor ward. Matthew felt anything but slow and quiet -- he was ready to pull his hair out by the roots. *What in the world could be taking so long? That damned doctor had better come out and give me an update soon!*

When Maddie's doctor did come to the waiting room, his face was grave. "Mr. Wheeler? Would you come with me, please?" He escorted Matt not into the labor room with his wife, but into a tiny consultation room with two chairs. Matt felt his stomach begin to churn. The doctor did not act as if he was about to deliver good news.

"Mr. Wheeler, your wife has experienced a complication called abruptio placenta. That means the placenta has begun to separate from the wall of the womb. Hemorrhage occurs between the womb and the separating placenta. This is a critical situation and Mrs. Wheeler must have an emergency Caesarean section in order to save her and the baby. I can't guarantee the outcome, but it must be done immediately or they will both die."

Matt was speechless for a second. How could this happen? Everything had been going so well. Finding his voice, he cried, "Do it! Please save my wife!"

He quickly scrawled his signature on the consent form Dr. Harris held out to him.

The doctor turned and went back through the double doors into the labor hall. Matt paced again, feeling helpless, frustrated, and terrified.

After what seemed like hours, but was in reality only about thirty minutes, a nurse came to the father's waiting room and touched Matt's arm.

"Mr. Wheeler, would you like to see your daughter?" she asked.

"Oh, God, yes! What about my wife? When can I see her?"

"Your wife is still in surgery, Mr. Wheeler. The doctor will come and talk to you when he is finished. With a C-section, they get the baby out right away, but it takes a while to close the incision; then the mother is in recovery for an hour or two before she goes to a room."

Only slightly reassured, Matt followed the white-clad nurse down a hallway, through another set of double doors, until they reached the nursery window. Rows of clear bassinets on rolling metal carts filled most of the space. Matt saw the nurse who had brought him back speaking to another nurse garbed in a green scrub dress and wearing a cap and mask. The masked nurse nodded and picked up a baby in the very back row, swaddled in a pink blanket. She looked up at Matt through the window, and walked up to the window, holding the tiny infant so that he could see her face.

Matt let out his breath in a loud sigh – he hadn't even realized he was holding it. The baby had her eyes open, and even seemed to be looking at him. Although he had always thought all babies looked alike, he was surprised to find that this one looked special. Her head was round and nicely shaped, and she didn't have the wrinkly, red newborn look he had heard about. Her eyes were a slate blue right now. He wondered if they would change color later.

The white-uniformed nurse was next to him again. "Isn't she beautiful?" she asked.

"Oh, yes! Will her eyes stay that color? When will I be able to hold her?" Matt had never felt so overwhelmed.

“All babies’ eyes are a bluish color when they are first born. In a few months they will probably begin to show the permanent color. As far as holding her – probably not until your wife is back in her room and awake. They will bring your daughter to her room tomorrow.”

“I don’t know if I can wait that long! Will they feed her in the nursery, then? My wife was planning to breastfeed, you know.”

“Mr. Wheeler, your wife will be too groggy from anesthesia to breastfeed tonight. We’ll supplement the baby with formula until Mrs. Wheeler can feed her. Now, I’ll show you back to the fathers’ waiting room. Dr. Harris will come to find you when he is finished.”

Matt watched as the green-clad nurse carried his daughter over to a rocking chair and began to coax her to take water from a bottle. He stood there for several moments, before deciding he had better return to the father’s waiting room in case Maddie’s doctor was finished and needed to see him.

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Hours passed, and Matt was beyond frantic. The doctor had not come; the staff had not updated him, and none of the labor and delivery nurses seemed to know anything about Maddie. Never had he felt so helpless. Perhaps she was dead. Perhaps they had finished the case and taken her to her room without telling him. Perhaps he was in the wrong waiting room. ... Suddenly, Matt made up his mind to take some action. He strode out of the waiting room to the elevator. He would persuade the switchboard operator to page Dr. Harris. If he couldn’t be reached, it was time to call in a few favors.

Standing at the elevator, Matt checked his watch. One o’clock in the morning! What time had they gotten here today ... yesterday? Nine, ten o’clock in the morning?

Just as he impatiently reached to press the elevator button again, the elevator doors opened and Dr. Harris stepped out. Like the nursery nurse, he was dressed in hospital-green scrubs. Unlike the nurse, his scrubs were smeared with blood.

“Mr. Wheeler, your wife is in recovery now. Come with me and I will tell you what is happening,” said the doctor. Matt noticed that the distinguished obstetrician looked as tired as he himself felt. He followed Dr. Harris to a room which turned out to be the same tiny consultation room they had used earlier. The doctor motioned for him to sit, and when both men were seated, he began to speak.

“As I told you, Mrs. Wheeler was experiencing a serious complication called abruptio placenta. We took her to the operating room and delivered the baby; fortunately, the blood loss hadn’t reached a critical point for the baby’s health. Your daughter was a little sedated from medication your wife had received in labor, but she came around well after some stimulation and an injection to reverse the narcotic level in her bloodstream. However, Mrs. Wheeler was continuing to bleed heavily; she was bleeding into the myometrium -- the wall of the uterus or womb. The uterus couldn’t contract; all of the blood vessels which supply the placenta were staying dilated because the muscle was boggy with accumulated blood. In order to save her life, I had to do a hysterectomy. Now, because Mrs. Wheeler had lost a significant amount of blood, she was going into shock. At this point, something happened which every doctor dreads. Her blood clotting mechanism began to go haywire. This is a condition known as DIC, or disseminated intravascular coagulation. Microscopic clots form, which can cut off circulation to affected areas and lead to death of tissue. At the same time, other parts of the clotting process fail, and bleeding continues. We have already given her blood, and she needs more blood to replace some of the clotting factors. I have to tell you, this disease has an extremely high death rate. We are doing everything possible to save your wife, but I cannot guarantee her survival.”

Matt’s head was reeling. All of the doctor’s medical terms were completely foreign to him; he barely knew the words womb and placenta. But one thing was crystal-clear: Maddie was critically ill and might die.

“Doctor, when can I see my wife? I really need to see her.”

“Mr. Wheeler, she is in an oxygen tent; she has a private nurse, and she is receiving blood. She is still very groggy from anesthesia

and won't know you're there. But I will take you to see her for a moment, if you insist on seeing her tonight." It was plain to Matt that the doctor didn't think he should see her.

"I do." Matt's voice was firm, although he ran a hand through his hair in agitation.

"All right. We'll go to the ICU -- she will be there for at least several days even if everything goes well," warned the doctor.

Matt stood and forced his weary legs to follow Dr. Harris. They had to press a buzzer at the doors to the intensive care unit and be admitted by a nurse. The white-uniformed nurse in her starched cap looked as fresh as if it was the middle of the morning, rather than the middle of the night.

She led Matt over to a cubicle where Maddie lay in a narrow hospital bed under an oxygen tent. Her eyes were closed; her pale face looked pinched; Matt noticed several purplish bruised-looking areas on her arms and face. Periodically a greenish liquid dripped into a glass container on the floor from the tube coming out of her nose. The glass bottle suspended over her bed dripped blood through a tube into her vein. A fluorescent light strip above her bed cast a dim glow on the scene.

Matt was exhausted and he could not suppress an anguished sob as he looked upon this sight. His lovely, healthy young wife had been giggling over the baby's kicking just the night before last.

"What are those blotches? And how long will it take before you will know ... before you'll know if she's going to be all right?"

"The blotches are signs of small hemorrhages under the skin. And the next 48 to 72 hours are critical. If she can make it through that time, she should recover, as long as infection doesn't set in. Mr. Wheeler, I assure you that we're doing everything we can for your wife. You can't help her now. Why don't you go home and get some rest?" Dr. Harris' voice was compassionate, and his hand on Matt's shoulder was firm. "You can't help her now, and you will need your strength later."

Hesitantly, Matt reached out to touch Maddie's hand as he silently said a prayer for her recovery. Then he turned reluctantly from her bed and allowed Dr. Harris to escort him to the main lobby.

"Doctor, how could something like this happen?" he asked. "How? Everything was going so well - that's what you told us."

"Mr. Wheeler, we can discuss this tomorrow. You are in no shape to talk about it now. Just let me say, it is one of the things in medicine which is unpredictable, and which respects neither wealth nor social class. It is why childbirth remains the great equalizer of women in the modern age. Again, I assure you that we will do everything modern medicine can do to help your wife to recover. I will be here at the hospital all night. If you wish to come back around nine o'clock in the morning, I will sit down with you and explain everything I possibly can. Now, the best way you can help your wife - and your new daughter - is to go home and get some rest."

## ***5. Daddy's Girl***

***July 12, 1956***

Matt Wheeler waited for Dr. Harris the next morning just outside the doors to the ICU. A nurse had already explained that there were strict regulations for visiting hours, in order for the patients to rest and for the nurses to give the necessary care. He paced back and forth, feeling helpless. He was a man of action, used to being in charge and giving the orders. He wanted to give some orders now, and to force the medical team to help Maddie. "Of course, what orders would I give?" he asked himself, running a hand through his thick red hair in frustration.

Moments later, Dr. Harris appeared. Although his eyes were bloodshot and puffed with weariness, he was freshly shaven and wore clean scrubs as well as an immaculate white coat.

"Good morning, Mr. Wheeler," he said, extending a hand to Matt. "I saw your wife an hour ago, and her condition was stable. If you'll come with me now, I will try to answer any questions you have about

her condition and my plan of treatment.”

Matt nodded. They walked into a small waiting room adjacent to the intensive care unit; Dr. Harris closed the door and indicated Matt was to sit down in one of the chairs.

“What would you like to know?” he began.

“First, how could this happen? Was there anything that could have prevented it? You said you needed to do a hysterectomy - does that mean my wife will never be able to have another child? How long --”

“Mr. Wheeler, I know you are terribly worried about your wife. Let me explain what happened. The majority of cases of placenta abruptio have no known cause. A small percentage of cases are associated with high blood pressure in the mother, or with smoking or cocaine use. I have reviewed Mrs. Wheeler’s records carefully, and she never had an elevated blood pressure. She told me that she quit smoking as soon as she knew she was pregnant. She has no history of drug use. So she is one of the majority of women who present with no preexisting risk factors for placenta abruptio.”

“That’s true,” responded Matt. “She did smoke a little - just a few cigarettes a day - before, but the day she found out she was pregnant, she threw her cigarettes away. She said it was bound to not be healthy, in spite of the placenta filtering everything out before it reached the baby. She wouldn’t even let me smoke in the apartment. And of course she would never use cocaine!”

“I didn’t suspect her of drug use. But I do see women sometimes who use it. Musicians, you know, or show business people -- it’s more common in this city than you might think.”

Dr. Harris continued his careful explanation. “The blood vessels where the surface of the placenta attaches to the inner surface of the uterus - or womb - are dilated or enlarged during pregnancy. Normally, after the baby is delivered, strong contractions of the muscle close off the blood vessels and the placenta detaches itself and is delivered a short time later. In your wife’s case, the contractions

were not effective because the abruption allowed blood to accumulate in the muscle wall of the uterus, causing it to remain large and boggy. Even with the administration of medications to contract the uterus, the bleeding continued. Finally, the only way to stop it was to remove the uterus - a hysterectomy. That *does* mean Mrs. Wheeler will never be able to have another child. Fortunately, I was able to leave her ovaries, so she won't experience immediate menopause. However, our priority right now is saving her life. You shouldn't have any trouble adopting if you want more children later."

Matt sat and listened in stunned silence. He vaguely remembered hearing some of this information yesterday. However, it still didn't seem real.

"Now, when a patient hemorrhages severely, as your wife did, she can go into shock. In a shock state, sometimes the blood doesn't clot properly. That is what happened yesterday. Medicine doesn't yet have the ability to isolate the factors in blood that regulate clotting. The only thing we can do is to give her whole blood and hope that the clotting factors will return to normal. I can't stress how critical this DIC condition is. Clotting and hemorrhages can affect lung or kidney function; or even cause loss of limbs. So far, Mrs. Wheeler's kidneys are performing well; we have her in oxygen because the hemorrhage reduces her body's ability to carry oxygen to all of the cells.

I expect that if the DIC resolves in the next forty-eight hours, she will survive and return home. But she has a long road ahead of her. Would you like to see her now?"

"Yes, please." Although Matt's mind was reeling, he knew that he did want very much to see Maddie.

In a moment they stood next to the narrow bed where Matt had seen her the previous night. Matt could see no change. Blood still dripped through a tube into her arm from a bottle suspended over the bed. The arm was taped securely to a long board so that Maddie could not bend her elbow. He noticed again the ugly purple blotches on her skin, although he was relieved to see that they were not spreading. Her pale face was slightly fuzzy in the misty atmosphere of the oxygen tent, and the hissing and bubbling of a humidification unit, as well as a regular beeping from a heart monitor, caused a

constant racket in the otherwise silent room.

“Nurse, how is she?” he inquired of the uniformed figure at the foot of Maddie’s bed.

“Her blood pressure and pulse are stable. She is still sedated from anesthesia, but that should be wearing off in the next few hours. If you want to return at one o’clock, she may be awake.” The nurse smiled reassuringly at him. “Why don’t you sit down next to her and say something? Sometimes patients can hear us even if we don’t think they are responding.”

Matt found himself sitting in the small straight chair next to Maddie’s bed. Suddenly he felt reluctant to touch her, to speak to her. She looked so frail that he felt a sudden dread of disturbing her or hurting her.

Clearing his throat, he finally covered her exposed hand with his, and said, “Darling, please rest and get better. I need you and so does our baby girl. She’s really beautiful, Maddie, honey, and I can’t wait for you to see her.”

For several seconds, Matt studied his wife’s face for a sign that she was able to hear him. Just when he was about to give up, he saw a flutter of her eyelids and felt a whisper-soft movement of her hand.

“Darling, I’m going to go now and see our daughter. I’ll be back later.” He rose and turned toward the nurse. “Thank you for everything you do. Please take good care of her.” She showed him to the door and he headed toward the nursery.

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Outside the nursery, Matt was in the midst of a heated discussion with a young nurse. He wanted to see and hold his daughter, but the nurse had told him fathers were only allowed to visit while the babies were in their mothers’ rooms. There were no facilities for him to visit the baby alone, since all of the patient rooms were full.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Wheeler, but those are the rules.” Her arms were

folded firmly against her chest.

Matt's face was flushed with frustration. "How in blazes can I visit my daughter while she is in her mother's room?" he asked angrily. "Her mother is in intensive care and she may ... may ... I can't wait that long!" His face twisted in a grimace as he fought not to give in to his fears.

"What's all of this commotion, Miss Kelley?" inquired a plump, gray-haired nurse who had come up behind Matt. He noticed that her name tag said Nursery Head Nurse. He was about to speak when the young nurse blurted out, "Oh, Miss Reid, this gentleman wants to visit with his baby. The mother is in intensive care and so I told him it was out of the question. We don't have any empty rooms to put him in."

Miss Reid's face cleared. She smiled at Matt and said, "Miss Kelley, we do have rules, but now and then, we must bend the rules to help our patients and families. You must be Mr. Wheeler. Sir, if you will come with me and show me some identification, I will have you wash up and get into a gown. We have a little work area in the nursery where you can sit and hold your baby."

Matt followed Miss Reid and tried not to take pleasure in the young nurse's discomfiture.

The kindly, grandmotherly nurse showed him a sink and antiseptic solution to wash with, and pulled out a voluminous gown with long sleeves and ties at the waist. Once she had helped him into it, she tied a surgical mask on his face and placed a stockinet cap on his head. Then she indicated he was to sit in a large wooden rocking chair which she had pulled into the work area. With a broad smile on her face, she rolled a bassinet into the room and lifted out a tiny bundle wrapped in a pink blanket.

"Here is your daughter, Mr. Wheeler. I'll place her in your arms. The important thing to remember is to support her head."

Matt was nervous and he could feel himself beginning to perspire under the bulky gown. But he was anxious to hold his daughter, and listened carefully as Miss Reid instructed him in holding her; she then

brought in a bottle of formula and showed Matt how to offer it to the baby. Soon she was sucking eagerly from the rubber nipple.

“Mr. Wheeler, I know your wife is extremely ill. Dr. Harris came by this morning and said she would be in intensive care for a week or more. He told me that she had wanted to breastfeed, but in her condition, she won’t be able to do that. He also asked me to arrange for you to visit with your daughter at least once a day. We may find another area for that, but for now, I thought it best if we improvised. It’s very important for parents to spend time with a new baby.”

Matt felt a tremendous relief to find that the hospital was going to help him be with his baby girl. He began to feel the slightest faith that Maddie would improve and the world could return to its normal state. When the baby stopped sucking, Miss Reid took her from him and burped her. Matt decided he should try to go to his office and check on things. It would also be necessary to call Maddie’s mother and sister to give them the news.

## ***6. Progress Notes***

Matt slammed down the phone on his desk. “Damn it all!” he exclaimed. It was always frustrating to deal with Catherine Hart, Maddie’s mother, and today was no different. Although she had known Maddie was close to her due date, she had flown to Paris three days earlier. Calling her hotel, Matt had learned that Catherine was out shopping. Finally he decided to send a telegram. “Baby Girl Wheeler born 7-11-56 wt 6 lb 10 oz Stop. Maddie critically ill Stop Come home Stop.”

Next, he called Maddie’s sister, Natalie.

“My God, Matthew! Dirk and I will be on the next train from Boston, just as soon as I can reach him. I’ll arrange to stay at the Plaza tonight, and then we can stay with you for awhile. You shouldn’t be facing this alone.” Natalie hung up without waiting for him to respond.

Matt liked Natalie, but she tended to be bossy. Two years older

than Maddie, she frequently gave her younger sister the benefit of her experience, especially in childrearing. As non-parents, Matt and Maddie hadn't liked to argue with her, but they both felt that Natalie's two-year-old son, Ben, was spoiled and received no discipline. It should be an experience having them here. He buried his head in his hands. It would be impossible to concentrate on business today; he asked his efficient secretary to tell all callers that he had been called out of the country on urgent business and would be gone for several weeks.

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Catherine Hart arrived in New York two days after Matt's telegram reached her. She immediately began to harass him to hire a nurse for the baby, and tried to have Dr. Harris replaced with her own doctor, a well-known Boston specialist. Fortunately, in Matt's opinion, the specialist declined to come to New York and interfere in another doctor's case.

Natalie and her son were ensconced in the Wheeler's comfortable apartment the day after she arrived in New York. Her husband, Dirk was an active, fun-loving fellow, who loved nothing better than a practical joke. The present situation didn't speak to his strengths, and within 48 hours he and Matt were barely on speaking terms. It was a relief to everyone when he was gone on a new job assignment. Matt wished that Natalie and her rambunctious son would go home, too, but it seemed ungrateful to complain, when she had come to offer him help and support. He only wished he could see some signs that she was actually helping.

Days passed and Matt's life fell into a pattern. He visited Maddie's room early in the morning, and then went to the nursery to see his daughter. He had begun to call her "Honey" as it felt strange and awkward to continue to call her "Baby". Miss Reid had been present on the past three days to escort him to a room. He felt professional in his hand washing technique, and had begun to feel comfortable holding, feeding, and burping the infant, who seemed to have a calm temperament. Several times he would have sworn she smiled at him, but Miss Reid assured him that this was merely a sign of gas. Diaper changing was not a skill he felt anxious to learn, however, and he

always handed the baby back to the nurse if it seemed time for such a thing. After the feeding, he would go to his office for a brief time, pretending to work. In reality, he paced the floor, wondering how in the world he was going to cope. Surely, they would make him bring Honey home in a few more days.

### ***July 16, 1956***

On the fifth day, Miss Reid brought him forms to fill out for the baby's birth certificate. "It's state law, Mr. Wheeler; the baby can't leave the hospital without a name. In fact, we're supposed to have the certificate filled out within 72 hours. I know you wanted to name her together with your wife. Did you have any names picked out?"

"Um, yes, we had discussed some names. But I want to name my Honey after her mother. She's not out of the woods yet and if anything happened --" he couldn't say the words. But Miss Reid seemed to understand how he felt. She continued filling out the form as Matt fed and burped his daughter.

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Within 72 hours, Maddie had stopped bleeding, and the doctors decided her blood volume had been replaced. By the fifth day, the purplish blotches were beginning to fade and turn ugly shades of brown, yellow and green. However, she was very weak and restless. Between her incision, gas pain, and breast engorgement, she was absolutely miserable. The third day after giving birth, her milk came in. Ice packs applied by the nurses ended up underneath her as often as on her chest. Her hips were sore and stiff from injections of pain medication and penicillin; both arms were bruised and tender from IV sticks. Groggy and sedated from medication, feverish from breast engorgement, she tossed and turned in vain attempts to get more comfortable. The tube was out of her nose, although she was still unable to have anything by mouth except Jell-O, broth, and tea, and the nurses forced her to get up and walk around the unit several times daily to prevent pneumonia and blood clots in her legs. The gurgle and hiss of oxygen continued, along with the clammy atmosphere inside the tent, which required frequent gown and bed changes. Day and night, she was awakened to have her temperature and blood pressure taken, to turn, and to have her catheter emptied. In

addition, she could hear every sound from the other patients and nurses. Even in the middle of the night, the nurses talked and moved their chairs noisily; they banged the metal charts while putting them away; they stamped pages in the charts with a noisy machine.

By the sixth day, Maddie was wide awake at one a.m. She had no idea if it was day or night. She couldn't remember when she had seen her husband last, although it had been earlier that evening. She wasn't completely sure where she was, although it was true that the white-uniformed women hovering over her bed looked like pictures she had seen of hospital nurses.

"Mrs. Wheeler, it's time for your medicine," one of them said now in a wheedling tone of voice.

"Medicine? I don't need any medicine. I just need to go home. I have to get my nursery ready. I'm going to have a baby soon." She placed a protective hand over her belly, which was slightly distended from gas.

"Mrs. Wheeler, you've had your baby. You've been very ill, but you're getting better now. Please take your medicine, so you can go home soon." The nurse smiled sweetly as she held a hypodermic syringe behind her back.

"Are you sure?" Suddenly Maddie felt less confident. Maybe they were right. Surely she had been larger than this yesterday -- or whenever it had been. She realized she had no idea what time or even what day it was. Meekly, she lay down and allowed herself to be stuck again.

### ***July 17, 1956***

The next morning, Dr. Harris was accosted by Maddie's nurse. "Mrs. Wheeler has been disoriented for the past couple of days. I think she's getting "hospitalitis" -- she's losing track of time and day, even of where she is. Last night she was very uncooperative with the staff."

"I see. I think we can move her to a regular room today, since all of her vital signs are stable. Perhaps she will get more rest and

recover faster away from this noisy environment.”

He entered Maddie’s cubicle and went to her side. She stared at him with wild, frightened eyes, and trembled when he reached out to check her pulse.

“Mrs. Wheeler, how would you like to move to a private room?” he asked.

“Where am I now? And who are you?” she responded. “I want to go home. I need to get ready for my baby.”

Dr. Harris sighed and sat down in the chair next to her bed. “Mrs. Wheeler, you are in the hospital. You had your baby six days ago. Because of complications, we had to take the baby by Caesarean section. You hemorrhaged and we finally had to do a hysterectomy. You have been very ill, but you’re much better now. Now you just need to rest and get your strength back, so you can go home with your husband and baby.”

He sat and waited for this explanation to sink in. He had often heard that patients who were critically ill had trouble remembering what had happened to them, even when they weren’t unconscious. It was also common for hospitalized patients to lose track of time because of sleep deprivation. He himself had not seen this phenomenon before, since he mainly dealt with healthy young women who were in the hospital to have a baby, and went home in a week or two. He had explained several times to Maddie what had happened, but she hadn’t retained the information.

“I had my baby?” She repeated the words in a wondering tone. “What is it?”

“You have a beautiful daughter. She weighed six pounds, ten ounces.”

“What’s her name?”

“Your husband named her Madeleine Grace. He was terribly worried about you and wanted to name her after her mother.”

“Oh. We had some different names picked out. I suppose it’s all right, but it might be confusing with two Madeleines in the house.” She gave him a tiny smile and Dr. Harris saw the first sign of a return of the vivacious Madeleine Wheeler he had met in his office.

## ***7. An Excellent Nurse***

***July 18, 1956***

“Matthew, you are simply going to have to hire a nurse for the baby. You know very well that you can’t stay home to care for it. If you won’t call the nursing agency, I will. I mean to see to it that my granddaughter receives proper care.” Catherine’s voice was shrill with annoyance. She couldn’t understand why Matt and Maddie hadn’t taken care of this matter before the baby was due. It was completely ridiculous, in her opinion, for Maddie to tie herself down to a baby. For one thing, she had social obligations, as the wife of Matthew Wheeler. Natalie was completely silly about this subject, but at least she didn’t have a social position to maintain. Catherine sniffed as she thought about Natalie’s husband, a traveling photographer for the National Geographic magazine.

“All right, Catherine! I’m calling them now, and I will interview applicants at my office.” Matt was determined to run this show himself. And although he would not admit it to Catherine, the nursery supervisor had also suggested that he hire a baby nurse.

“Even after Mrs. Wheeler comes home, she won’t have the stamina to care for a baby full-time for a while,” Miss Reid told him. She gave him business cards from several nursing agencies.

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After interviewing 15 women, Matt chose a kindly-looking middle-aged woman for Honey’s nurse. Her name was Mrs. Carter, and she was a widow, the sole support of an invalid mother. Matt felt reassured by this since he felt her situation meant she would be motivated to work hard and do a good job. She spoke as if she was very knowledgeable about babies, and also as if she enjoyed children.

“I was in my last position for five years, Mr. Wheeler,” Mrs. Carter told him. “I only left because the twins I cared for started school. You will find a reference for me from the Banks family.”

In fact, the Banks family gave Mrs. Carter a glowing reference, and seemed to be very sorry she was no longer in their employ. Matt had his secretary research Robert Banks and his wife, and was satisfied that Mrs. Carter was the jewel they claimed her to be.

### ***July 20, 1956***

The day Matt was to bring his daughter home was another Hudson River Valley scorcher -- bright, sunny, and already in the upper 70s by sunrise. Mrs. Carter and her personal belongings had arrived at the Wheeler apartment the previous evening via car service as Matt had arranged.

“Mr. Wheeler, I’m ready to go to the hospital now if you are,” she now said briskly, closing the door to the nursery and carrying a small suitcase which held the soft receiving blanket, lightweight kimono, and tiny booties she had chosen as Honey’s coming-home outfit.

At the hospital, Matt waited impatiently with Mrs. Carter in the room where he had visited with Honey every day. He paced the floor for what felt like hours before all of the baby’s paperwork was completed. Finally, Honey appeared in the arms of Miss Reid for the last time. Mrs. Carter took the baby and efficiently outfitted her, fastening the diaper pins perfectly evenly before slipping a pair of tiny rubber pants over the absorbent cloth. Next, she swaddled her neatly in the receiving blanket, without a wasted motion, refastened the suitcase, and stood with her charge cradled in one arm and the case in her other hand.

“I think we’re ready now, sir,” she said.

Matt had begun to feel himself very skilled at infant care – well, not diaper changing – but he was a rank amateur compared to Mrs. Carter. He felt reassured, but somehow unnecessary. Quickly, he brushed that feeling away.

“Let’s take Honey upstairs and introduce her to her mother,” he

said eagerly.

“Oh, Mr. Wheeler, I’m terribly sorry.” His friend, Miss Reid, was speaking. “There are infectious cases on your wife’s floor. That’s the last place you should be taking a newborn.” Her voice was regretful but very firm.

“If there are infectious cases on my wife’s floor, shouldn’t I be worried about *her* being exposed to those patients?” Matt was shocked that it would be all right for Maddie to be on such a floor when she was so fragile and had been so close to death. He felt a tingle of renewed fear for her at this revelation.

“Infants’ immune systems aren’t developed, sir. That’s the reason you shouldn’t take your daughter to that floor. Besides, they are very strict on visitors – absolutely no one under sixteen years of age is allowed above the first floor, unless they are a patient. I’m sure there is no danger to your wife. She is in a private room, and didn’t you tell me they are giving her penicillin injections?”

“Oh, yes, I suppose that will kill any germ that might try to infect her. I know she would get better faster, though, if she could see our beautiful daughter,” Matt responded wistfully.

“Why don’t you take some pictures of the baby when we get back to the apartment?” suggested Mrs. Carter. “There is an overnight film developing service near there. You can take pictures at home today, and bring the prints to Mrs. Wheeler tomorrow.”

“That’s a good idea. Let’s go.” Matt’s spirits lifted. At last there was something he could do. Dirk and Natalie had given a very nice camera to the Wheelers for Christmas, and Matt had been intrigued by the techniques Dirk was eager to demonstrate. He had taken a number of snapshots of Maddie, the nursery, the ducks on the lake in Central Park, and the vacation lodge in the Catskills where he and Maddie had spent a weekend in early May.

Matt entered Maddie’s room that evening with a bouquet of yellow roses in one hand and a lovely wrapped package in the other. He had left Honey home with her aunt Natalie, her cousin Ben, and Mrs.

Carter. It was a balm to his spirit for once that Natalie was still visiting. Although he felt comfortable with the nurse, it reassured him to know that a family member was present when he left his newborn daughter with a stranger for the first time. After taking a whole roll of pictures of the baby and letting Ben play with the exploded flashbulbs -- until he put one in his mouth, Matt had called his secretary and asked her to go to Macy's, buy the prettiest negligee they had, have it gift-wrapped, and take it to the hospital gift shop. He would pick it up when he went to visit his wife. Meanwhile, he took his roll of film to the overnight developer and bought flowers at the florist shop in the hospital lobby.

Maddie looked up to see her husband entering the hospital room behind a huge bouquet of flowers. Not sure just what to do, she smiled shyly at him.

"How are you, my darling?" he asked, bending down to kiss her thin cheek. He tried not to let her see that it hurt him to look at her. Always slender, she had lost weight and her once-shiny hair was dull and lifeless. She grimaced with pain upon the slightest movement; her arms and legs still bore the marks from the skin hemorrhages. Matt felt a wave of guilt – she had been so ill as a result of bearing his child. He couldn't blame it on poor medical care; Dr. Harris had told him it was one of those things which just happened. All of the doctors and nurses had worked hard to help her. No, it was he himself that was to blame. A voice inside his head insisted, *she wanted the baby too*, but he still felt somehow to blame. *God, please let her get well*, he prayed, *and I'll take care of her as long as I live*.

"Matthew? Are you here to take me home? I've got to finish getting ready for the baby," Maddie said to him. "I don't think I like this hotel. The food is bland, and the bed is very uncomfortable. Besides, I miss you. Please take me with you."

"Darling, you've had the baby – she's a sweet little girl. You're still in the hospital. You were very ill, but now you're better. Dr. Harris says you'll be able to go home in another week or so." Matt smiled encouragingly at his wife, but he was beginning to wonder if her mind had slipped. He had answered her questions about going home every day for the past four days, but she couldn't seem to retain the

information. Matt made up his mind then to ask Dr. Harris to have her examined by a psychiatrist.

Matt visited for the allotted thirty minutes, ringing the nurse to ask for a vase for the roses, and opening the package for Maddie so she could see the lovely ivory negligee and robe, with matching slippers. She smiled happily and exclaimed over the silky, lace-edged garments before placing them carefully back into their tissue-lined box. "I'll wear them for you once I get my shape back," she told him with a flirtatious bat of her eyelashes.

***July 22, 1956***

"Mr. Wheeler," said Dr. Harris, "The staff psychiatrist, Dr. Young, has examined Mrs. Wheeler, as you requested. It is his conclusion that she is suffering from the effects of sleep deprivation. He recommends that she be left undisturbed by the nursing staff from ten o'clock at night until seven o'clock in the morning. He wants her to receive a menu, so she can choose her food for each meal, and he suggested that she be taken to the solarium twice a day. Her condition has stabilized and I expect that she will be able to go home in another week to ten days, so I am in favor of implementing those recommendations. I think you will see a big change in her mental state."

"That sounds reasonable," Matt replied. "But why can't she just go home now? I could have a private duty nurse for her there; we have a cook and a maid, so she would be able to rest and eat good meals, and she would be in familiar surroundings."

"That is true. However, I'd like for her to remain in the hospital until her stitches can be removed, and she has another five days to go for that. She is still having fever intermittently, and needs to be watched for signs of infection. She is not out of the woods for some kind of late complication, and I'd like to see her regain more of her strength before I send her home."

"All right. You're the doctor. I defer to your expert judgment. But I expect to see some real progress in the next couple of days." Matt was struggling to control his impatience, but he knew Dr. Harris was thorough and concerned for Maddie.

It took several days, but finally Maddie Wheeler achieved a full night's sleep three nights in a row. With Matt's help, she had filled out her menus, although her appetite was still poor. Her nurse took to the solarium each day in a wheelchair, and she took an interest in the horticultural displays as well as seeing the outdoor walled garden. Her confused episodes gradually decreased, and her lucid intervals were more consistent. Although her memory still seemed to fail sporadically, she was quicker to accept explanations.

Natalie and her son went back to Boston, since it seemed that the danger was over. However, Catherine Hart planned to continue her stay at the Plaza until after her daughter returned home.

### ***July 28, 1956***

At seven o'clock in the morning Maddie lay in an early stage of wakefulness, not quite ready to open her eyes, although she could smell the flowers which filled her room. She felt some soreness in her lower abdomen, and wondered for a moment if this was an early phase of labor. Reaching down to feel her belly, she was frightened to discover she was no longer pregnant. Her breasts, too, had shrunk – they were even smaller than they had been before her pregnancy. She opened her eyes to see a white-clad nurse at her bedside, holding a basin of warm water.

“Are we ready for our bath?” inquired the nurse with a smile.

“Where is my baby?” Maddie's voice was sharper than she meant it to be.

“You've had your baby; in fact, she is seventeen days old today,” replied the nurse. “Your daughter is at home and doing well. You were very ill after the birth, and had to stay in the hospital longer than usual.” This explanation had been repeated over and over until it was routine for the nursing staff. Today, Miss Dennis determined to try to do more to stimulate Mrs. Wheeler's memory. “Do you remember being in the ICU and receiving blood transfusions?”

“ICU – you mean intensive care unit? Was I in intensive care? And you say I had to have blood transfusions? I don't remember any

of that. Where am I now?"

"This is a regular post-surgical floor. What about that bath now? We don't want our water to get cold, do we?"

"Well, I don't know about you, but *I* don't want *mine* to get cold!"

While the nurse bathed Maddie and then changed her bed, Maddie quietly submitted to her care and tried to remember the past seventeen days. She couldn't remember anything past this room, though, and finally gave up trying.

Dr. Harris visited just before lunch. He pronounced himself very pleased with her progress. "Your incision is healing well," he said. "Your temperature has been normal for the last three days. No signs of infection or separation of the wound since I removed the stitches. You should be able to go home in a few more days. I'd like to see you eating more and walking the length of the hallway four times daily. Besides that, I'm going to start you on an iron supplement."

Her face lighted up, and Maddie glanced to several framed photographs of her new daughter, displayed on a small table which also held a fresh bouquet of roses.

"Oh, Dr. Harris, I'll try to eat more. I can't wait to go home to my husband and baby. Even though I've seen her pictures, she still doesn't seem real to me. You know I did plan to breastfeed her, but I don't think I have any milk now. Did I ever have any?"

"Yes, you did, but it dried up a long time ago. It sounds like she is thriving on her formula, though. Your husband gives me daily reports, and she's gaining weight well."

"That's good. I guess he's told me, too. It's so hard to remember things. I wonder if I'll be able to take care of her. I know Matt did tell me he hired a nurse for her. I was looking forward to caring for our baby myself." Maddie's voice was wistful.

"Mrs. Wheeler, it's for the best that he has a nurse for her. You won't have the stamina to care for an infant for a while yet, and Mrs.

Carter is excellent. However, you should be able to help with her care while you regain your strength.”

## **8. Homecoming**

### **August 1, 1956**

Finally, the date of Maddie’s discharge had arrived. In her excitement, she was up, bathed, and breakfasted by nine, with her clothing laid out in readiness. Matt arrived at nine-thirty, so that they could leave immediately after Dr. Harris discharged her. Maddie walked to the end of the hallway and back to her room with him three times to make the time pass.

Finally, Dr. Harris pronounced her fit to go home. Quickly, she dressed, applied a bit of makeup, and arranged her hair in a simple French twist. An aide brought a wheelchair to the room and she submitted to the traditional ride.

Home at last! Maddie never thought she would be so happy to see the Art Deco towers of the Majestic apartment building. All the way up to the twelfth floor she twisted her hands anxiously in anticipation of seeing her baby for the first time. Once inside, Matt helped her into a comfortable armchair and took her suitcase back to the bedroom. Suddenly, she felt a wave of fatigue. Her sleep had been restless; she had been up early; the ride from the hospital seemed endless; and the heat outside had felt like a solid wall. A tray on the adjacent end table held two glasses of iced tea and a plate of small sandwiches. Maddie took a sip of tea, but decided not to eat anything just now. There were butterflies in her stomach at the thought of handling a tiny infant for the first time. The only baby she had spent any time with was her nephew Ben, and Natalie had been so protective of him that she had barely let Maddie hold him.

Matt reappeared from the bedroom wing, a middle-aged woman carrying a bundle of blankets in his wake. Maddie’s heart beat faster. This must be the nurse with her daughter. She strained to see the baby’s face.

“Darling, here’s our Honey-girl. Isn’t she beautiful?” Matt’s voice

was tender as he stroked the petal-soft cheek. The nurse leaned over so Maddie could get a better look. The baby was sleeping. Her rosebud lips were slightly parted, and for a second, Maddie thought they curled in a smile. Her eyes were closed, and the fine, light brown eyelashes and eyebrows were unbelievably delicate. A tiny fist poked out from the blanket. Maddie marveled at the perfect miniature fingernails.

“This is Mrs. Carter, the baby nurse, dearest. Mrs. Carter, this is my wife, Madeleine.”

“Please, let me hold her,” she said, looking into Matt’s eyes.

“Would you like to feed her?” asked the nurse. “I have a bottle ready.”

“Oh, yes!” Maddie breathed. She reached for the bundle and Mrs. Carter placed the baby in her arms.

Softly, she stroked the baby’s cheek and her downy head with her right hand while cradling her in the other arm. Her heart was too full for speech and she felt tears gathering in her eyes. As if sensing that her mother was holding her, Honey opened her eyes and began to root toward Maddie’s finger.

“Here is her bottle, Mrs. Wheeler. I’ve already tested the temperature and it’s just right.”

Hesitantly, Maddie placed the rubber nipple on the baby’s lower lip and watched as she opened her mouth to accept it. In a moment Honey was sucking strongly and Maddie watched in fascination as streams of tiny bubbles showed that formula was being swallowed.

“Keep the bottle tilted so the nipple stays full of milk, Mrs. Wheeler. Otherwise the baby will swallow too much air.”

Quickly, Maddie adjusted the tilt of the bottle. This feeding was more complicated than she had thought. Soon, Mrs. Carter announced that it was time for a burp. Maddie dislodged the bottle from Honey’s mouth with some difficulty, and the baby immediately

began to fuss and root for the nipple again. Setting the bottle on the adjoining table, Maddie clumsily lifted Honey to her shoulder, where Mrs. Carter efficiently placed a clean diaper to catch any spit-up. Maddie patted the baby's back gently, being careful to support her head at the same time. Nothing happened. She continued patting for a couple of minutes – still no burp. Maddie looked uneasily at her husband. Babies had to burp, didn't they? Matt had sat down in the chair next to her. He looked as if he wanted to take the baby, but he didn't, instead smiling reassuringly at her.

“Would you like me to try, ma'am?” Mrs. Carter finally offered.

Gratefully, Maddie surrendered Honey to the nurse's expert arms. Almost immediately, Mrs. Carter was able to elicit a loud burp. She handed Honey back to her mother for more formula. Maddie continued to feed her daughter, being careful to tilt the bottle properly. She was becoming tired and perspiring with the effort to remember everything she had been taught in her infant care classes. Her next attempt at burping was more successful, but Honey managed to spit up a mouthful of formula at the same time – right down her mother's dress. Maddie was startled by the sudden wetness and it took her a moment to dab the wet spot with the diaper on her shoulder, while keeping a secure hold on the baby. She looked up and saw Mrs. Carter's mouth pursed with suppressed amusement.

Finally, the feeding was done. Maddie wiped a trickle of formula from Honey's slack mouth. The baby was relaxed in her satiated state.

“Time for a diaper change!” announced Mrs. Carter. “Would you like to change her, Mrs. Wheeler?”

“Yes, I would. If you can take her while I get up –“ Maddie was afraid to try to stand while still holding the baby. *What if I dropped her?*

Matt spoke up then. “Darling, I'm going to the office now for a few hours. I'll see you later this afternoon.” He bent over her to give her a kiss and helped her to stand as Mrs. Carter took Honey.

Maddie followed Mrs. Carter back to the bedroom wing, but hesitated in confusion when the nurse passed the small room next to the master bedroom, which she herself had decorated in sunny yellow, pink, blue, and green pastels for the baby's nursery. Instead, Mrs. Carter continued on to an unused spare bedroom.

"Mrs. Wheeler, the room prepared for the nursery was too small for the baby's furniture and a bed and dresser for me. Mrs. Hart suggested that I could move the nursery into this room," she explained as she saw Maddie hesitate.

Maddie was too shocked to respond. *To think that my mother – and Matthew! would allow the nursery to be moved without saying a word to me about it!* Of course, it was true that the other room was too small for the baby and a nurse. Maddie had not planned to have a live-in nurse, after all.

Mrs. Carter placed Honey on top of the waist-high changing table, and plucked a clean diaper from the shelf underneath. Maddie stepped up to change her daughter. First, she removed the rubber pants. Then she unfastened and removed the diaper pins, one at a time, placing them safely at the foot of the changing table. She lifted Honey from the wet diaper and handed it to Mrs. Carter. Then she wiped her daughter with a warm washcloth the nurse had brought in while Maddie was removing the diaper. Maddie accepted a clean, soft diaper from Mrs. Carter and placed it under Honey's bottom. *Whew! There are a lot of steps involved in this process – how could I have done it by myself?* she wondered. Bringing the front and back corners of the diaper together over Honey's left thigh, Maddie began to try to push the diaper pin through the multiple thicknesses of the absorbent cloth. It wouldn't go through. After a couple of tries, she looked at Mrs. Carter, silently imploring her for a suggestion.

"Run the point through your hair; the natural oils will help it to slide through," suggested the older woman.

Maddie wrinkled her nose slightly. That just seemed kind of – icky! However, she tried it, and the pin slid through like butter. Unfortunately, Honey chose that moment to screw her face up into a grimace and strain fiercely, and a squirting sound indicated what

Maddie's nose confirmed. She removed the pin, wiped Honey clean with a fresh washcloth and handed Mrs. Carter the soiled diaper. A new clean diaper was produced. Maddie's first pin went through smoothly. Elated with that success, she pushed too hard with the second one, and jabbed it into her own finger, which shielded Honey's tender skin from the sharp point.

Maddie gasped in pain at the unexpected prick, but finished fastening the diaper before withdrawing her injured fingertip. She stared at the drop of blood which appeared on her fingertip, feeling suddenly dizzy and a little queasy. Mrs. Carter pulled the nursery rocking chair up behind her, handed her a tissue to press against the wound, and indicated she would finish changing the baby as Maddie sank down onto the chair. As she lifted Honey in order to change her gown – damp around the neckline from dribbled formula – the diaper nearly fell off. Efficiently, she refastened the pins to secure it snugly before replacing the rubber pants.

After settling Honey into her crib, Mrs. Carter helped Maddie walk to the bathroom, where the nurse cleaned her finger and applied Mercurochrome and a Band-Aid. Maddie was exhausted from her efforts and decided to go to bed. She buzzed for the maid, Irene, and asked not to be disturbed.

Lying in bed, Maddie began to feel anxious about the injury to her finger. Although the wound was tiny, it throbbed. *Could a person get blood poisoning from being stuck with a diaper pin? If I hadn't been so ill, I'm sure I wouldn't be so worried now.* She decided to call her sister from the bedside telephone.

“Natalie, it's Maddie. ... Yes, I just got home today. ... Of course, I'm tired, but I feel all right. The reason I called you? Oh, I stuck myself with a diaper pin today. I just wondered if I could get blood poisoning from it – I feel stupid asking, but I'm scared!”

Natalie questioned her about the episode, and told her to watch for redness, swelling, pus, or red streaks. She reassured Maddie that she had stuck herself before, and that washing and applying disinfectant should prevent any problems. Although Natalie was not a nurse, she was an experienced mother, and Maddie decided to trust

her. Suddenly, she felt very sleepy and ended her call.

When Matt arrived home, he found his wife still sleeping. He asked Irene to serve their dinner in the bedroom so she wouldn't have to get up, but after supper, he wanted to see Honey again. Mrs. Carter brought her out, but when she offered to let Maddie hold and feed her, Matt spoke up. "I haven't been able to hold my Honey-girl all day today. Let me feed her this time."

Maddie looked at him gratefully. She wanted to feed her daughter again, but after this morning's experience, she felt extremely nervous and clumsy. *Maybe when I get stronger, I'll be able to do better*, she thought. For now, she watched with envy as Matt held, fed, and burped the baby with no trouble at all.

## **9. *Baby and Child Care***

### ***August 8, 1956***

After being home for a week, Maddie had fed Honey several more times. She was becoming more skilled at burping and changing the diaper, but her first attempts at bathing the baby left her wet and limp with fatigue. Honey had screamed the entire time, and Maddie was convinced it was due to her clumsiness. Mrs. Carter was always present at these activities, and although she never spoke a critical word, Maddie felt that the nurse was disdainful of her own efforts. It was true that she offered helpful suggestions, but each time Mrs. Carter made a suggestion or actually took over the task, Maddie felt more helpless and stupid. Mrs. Carter did everything so easily and efficiently! Maddie felt envious. Although she realized that every new mother experienced feelings of inadequacy, most did not have access to expert help, so there wasn't a constant comparison of skill.

Catherine Hart was visiting today, and Maddie dreaded her arrival. After being admitted by the maid, Catherine asked Maddie to have the baby brought out so she could see her. When Mrs. Carter appeared carrying Honey, Catherine smiled in approval.

"Matthew did a good job choosing my granddaughter's nurse," she told Maddie after Honey was taken back to the nursery. "I was afraid

he wouldn't. Men don't really know about such things! But that Mrs. Carter is a jewel."

"She's very good," Madeleine agreed. "She dearly loves Honey, too. But I'm not sure how long I'm going to keep her. I'd really like to take care of my baby myself, once I am stronger."

"Don't be ridiculous, Madeleine! You will need to return to your social obligations in a few more weeks. Matt Wheeler's wife cannot stay home to care for a baby. The baby doesn't know who is taking care of her, and she will do much better if you let the nurse do it. It's just foolish to do it yourself when you are able to afford the help. You know that Matt has agreed to join the board of the New York City Ballet. The two of you will be expected to attend the gala before the ballet leaves for its European tour later this month. And what about the Guggenheim Museum fundraiser? And the Sloane Hospital Women's Auxiliary? My dear girl, if you don't keep a nurse, you won't be able to fulfill your obligations."

Maddie was silent. She wasn't really interested in her social obligations, but she had to admit Catherine was right. If she was to be a helpmeet for Matthew, there were things she had to do.

"Mother, I'm sure you are right about some of those parties and charity functions. But I really want to spend time with my daughter."

"Of course I'm right." Catherine's tone of voice admitted no doubt. "You need to rest and get yourself back into shape. The Ballet gala is only a week from now."

"I don't see how I can go to the Ballet gala. I'm sorry about that, since it's the one I really wanted to attend. But it's not even six weeks since I had Honey, and I know I don't have the energy for a late evening like that. Matt will have to go without me."

"You must do as you think best, my dear. But whatever you do, don't let that nurse go. Her like is not to be found every day."

Maddie saw her mother out after a light lunch, then felt the familiar tiredness creeping up on her. She had gotten into the habit

of taking a nap each afternoon, and today was no exception. After supper, Matt would want to take Honey for a stroll in the luxurious baby carriage that had been Catherine's gift, and she needed to steel herself for the walk in the sweltering heat of evening.

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Natalie and Dirk drove down for the weekend. Matt insisted Mrs. Carter should take off for a visit to her mother. "My wife and I can take care of Honey this weekend," he reassured the nurse. "You've been here without a break for over three weeks. And as you know, my sister-in-law is an experienced mother. We'll be fine."

Mrs. Carter was obviously reluctant to leave her charge. "I would like to visit with my mother," she replied. "But I will leave you her phone number. Please don't hesitate to call if you need me to come back early."

She also made out a schedule for Honey's feedings, naps, and baths, so that every bit of the baby's routine could continue uninterrupted in her nurse's absence.

Saturday evening, the four adults sat in the Wheelers' comfortable living room, playing bridge. Honey slept in the crib in her room with the door open, so that they could hear her when she awoke. Ben was playing with some blocks on the floor between his parents' chairs. As usual, Natalie was making her opinions known.

"Maddie, I can't believe you are letting that woman dictate to you how to care for your child! I mean, leaving you a written schedule – she has a lot of nerve. I thought you wanted to take care of your own baby."

Maddie replied mildly, "I'm glad she did leave the schedule. Mrs. Carter is very good and she's really fond of Honey. I do want to be more involved in her care, but I still get tired so quickly. I'm not comfortable yet being on my own with Honey all day long."

"And you never will be comfortable unless you let that woman go and start doing things yourself. Why would anyone have a child just

to hand its care over to someone else?”

“Well, Mother did point out that I have obligations to help Matt in his business by attending social functions and entertaining.”

“Oh, Mother did, did she? There’s your perfect example of a parent!”

“Now, girls!” Matt interrupted the conversation, which was threatening to get heated. “Natalie, Maddie’s doctor agrees with me that Maddie is not strong enough yet to take on the baby’s care full-time. If you can forget how your sister nearly died, I can’t.” His face was flushed with emotion as he spoke.

“I’m sorry, Maddie, sweetie.” Natalie had the grace to look ashamed of her outburst. “Of course you haven’t gotten all of your strength back yet. But you never will get more comfortable if you don’t do it.”

Just then, Dirk exclaimed, “I think I hear the baby now! She sounds mad, too.”

They could all hear a thin wail from down the hall. Ben stopped playing with his blocks and said “Baby crying! Baby mad!”

“Benjy, darling, why don’t you come with me? We’ll go check on your cousin while Aunt Maddie and Uncle Matt get her bottle ready.” Already Natalie was striding down the hallway to the nursery, Ben toddling along in her wake.

Matt stood and helped Maddie to get up. This would be Honey’s first feeding since Mrs. Carter’s departure. Maddie suddenly felt anxious. Together, they went in to the kitchen to get a bottle of formula. Six full, sterilized bottles sat neatly on the refrigerator shelf, each with its nipple inverted into the bottle and the flat nipple shield in place. Maddie took a bottle, removed the ring and shield, flipped the nipple and seated it in the ring, and shook a drop of formula onto her wrist. It was quite cold.

“We need to heat this bottle; she can’t drink the milk straight from

the refrigerator, can she?” she appealed to her husband.

“Of course not! But I never thought to ask Mrs. Carter how she heats it before feeding Honey,” answered Matt.

“I think you’d have to heat a pan of water and put the bottle in it. But how do you turn on the stove?”

“I know you have to light the pilot light.” Matt searched around the gas stove for matches. Maddie looked at the appliance as if afraid it would explode.

“Do you want to call Cook?” she asked. The cook and Irene had retired to their own quarters on the other side of the service entrance. They could be summoned in case of need through an intercom system.

“No, I’m sure we can figure it out.”

They heard the sound of crying getting closer. Natalie, with the baby in her arms, and Dirk joined them in the kitchen. “What’s taking you two so long?” Dirk asked. “Anyone would think you never heated a bottle before,” he added jokingly.

“Well, I’m quite sure my sister has never lighted a stove before! Show them how it’s done, sweetheart,” Natalie directed her husband.

Maddie took Honey from her sister and began rocking her in her arms while they waited for the bottle to heat up, but the baby’s cries only got louder. Maddie was embarrassed. Surely she should be able to soothe her own child. She went back to the living room and sat down in an armchair. Ben had followed her, and once she was seated, he leaned into the baby’s face, staring intently at her.

“Baby cry,” he said, looking up at Maddie. “Don’t cry, baby! Play blocks!” He began waving a block in front of Honey’s face. Attracted by the bright object’s movement, Honey actually stopped crying for a few seconds. Just as Maddie began to relax, and smiled at her nephew, he dropped his block, which hit Honey in the center of her forehead. After a shocked pause, Honey’s cries resumed at an even

higher volume.

“Benjy! Darling, you have to be careful around the baby!” Natalie swooped in and snatched her son away from the screaming infant, mouthing an apology to her sister. Maddie set her jaw and held Honey against her shoulder. Just then, Matt and Dirk appeared with the heated bottle. Maddie almost grabbed it from her husband, shook a couple of drops onto her wrist again, and satisfied that it was the right temperature, popped it into Honey’s open mouth. Abruptly, the screams stopped as the baby began to suck vigorously.

Ben had been released from his mother’s grasp and he again made his way over to Maddie, where he hung over her lap, watching in fascination as his cousin took her bottle. When Maddie set the bottle down in order to burp her daughter, he picked it up and tried sucking on it himself while her head was turned.

“Benjy! Don’t suck the baby’s bottle!” Natalie jumped up and took the bottle from her son, who wore a surprised expression on his face.

“He just wanted to see what it tasted like.” Dirk was struggling to hold back laughter, because he could see that Matt and Maddie were not amused, but at the look on Ben’s face, he began to chuckle, then to guffaw with laughter.

“Now we’ll have to heat another bottle! She was not even half-finished.” Maddie was upset. Matt headed out to the kitchen to heat another pan of water, his mouth set in a grim line.

“Just take off the nipple and wash it! Ben didn’t have it in his mouth for that long!” Natalie defended her son and followed Matt to the kitchen.

Maddie felt like crying, even though she knew it was ridiculous to be so upset. Why did everything have to be so much work?

Dirk took pity on his sister-in-law. “While they’re in the kitchen, why don’t I take Honey and change her diaper? I’m sure she’s ready for a change – Ben always was by the time he had taken half of his

feeding.”

Maddie smiled gratefully at him as he took Honey from her. He whistled as he carried her back to the nursery. She was truly amazed at how comfortable he seemed to be with the infant. *Of course, with his job, he has such an irregular schedule. I know he spent a lot of time with Ben when he was a baby,* she thought.

Still, she was thankful that when the feeding was finished, she could excuse herself and go to bed. It had been an exhausting evening. She said her good nights before taking Honey back to the nursery. Just as she was dozing off, Matt joined her in the bed, and she snuggled into the circle of his embrace. “Thank goodness I have you,” she said to him, twisting around to face him. “I don’t know what I’d do without you. You’re such a wonderful daddy.”

Gently, he kissed her and held her closer. “You’re a wonderful mommy,” he replied.

“No, I’m not,” she contradicted him. “Even Dirk is better with Honey than I am. But I *am* trying.”

“I don’t want you to feel like you have to take over all of Honey’s care. You need to take the time you need to rest and recover. I meant what I said – you nearly died and it will take time for you to get stronger. Mrs. Carter does a good job and it’s best for Honey and for you that you don’t wear yourself out trying to do it all.” Matt’s voice was very firm.

“You are so good to me. I don’t know what I could ever have done to deserve a husband like you,” Maddie told him.

## ***10. Shocking News***

### ***September 12, 1956***

After being weighed and having her blood drawn, Maddie sat in the exam room of Dr. Harris’ office, wearing an ugly hospital gown which swallowed her slim body. She was a little nervous about one

question she wanted to ask the obstetrician. The room was cold and she was just debating with herself whether to get up, go into the hall, find the nurse and ask for a blanket, when the door opened and Dr. Harris walked into the small room.

“Hello, Mrs. Wheeler. You’re looking much better than you did the last time I saw you. I asked you to come in eight weeks after your C-section because you had to spend such a long time in the hospital. I usually see my patients six weeks after giving birth. Let’s get this exam over with, then I will have you get dressed and my nurse will show you into my conference room. I find that patients are more comfortable asking questions when they are dressed and sitting in a comfortable chair.”

Maddie submitted to the exam stoically; it was no better and no worse than the others she had experienced. It was just a relief to have it over. Dr. Harris made a few monosyllabic comments during the exam which sounded like he found everything normal.

Dressed again, she was taken to the consultation room, where Dr. Harris sat behind a desk, with some papers in front of him which she supposed were from her chart.

“Mrs. Wheeler, your exam shows you have recovered well overall from childbirth and surgery. You may still be experiencing fatigue at times; that is very common following general anesthesia, and can continue for several months. You are still slightly anemic, and that will cause reduced energy. I recommend continuing the iron tablets I have prescribed. You are also a little underweight. I realize some of you ladies think you can’t be too thin, but I assure you that you can be too thin for optimal health. Follow a good healthy diet; this is one time in your life when you can eat all the steak you want to! Your muscle tone will improve, too, if you can get some exercise each day. Now that your incision is healed, you can be more active. Now, do you have any questions for me?”

Maddie hesitated, and swallowed the lump in her throat before she spoke the question that had been constantly on her mind.

“Dr. Harris, my husband and I haven’t resumed – you know –

marital relations yet. I think he's been a little afraid to touch me since I had so much ... trouble. What I want to know is ... is there anything I can do to keep from getting pregnant again right away? I just know ... I'm not ready for another baby."

"My dear Mrs. Wheeler, I'm very sorry. I told you about this while you were in the hospital, but it must have been during the time you were so confused. I had to perform a hysterectomy because of the hemorrhage. You won't be able to get pregnant again, although you could always consider adoption if you and your husband want more children later on."

Maddie was too shocked to respond. How could it be that she had no memory of being told about the hysterectomy? How could she have been at home for nearly six weeks, and no one had ever said anything to her about it? Why in heaven's name, hadn't *Matt* said anything?

"Mrs. Wheeler, as I said, the surgery was necessary to save your life. I'm terribly sorry that you had to experience this at such a young age. Fortunately, I was able to save your ovaries, so you won't have to experience immediate menopause. Overall, you were lucky. A high percentage of women who experience the complications you did don't survive. I realize this news comes as a shock to you, and if you'd like to come back and discuss it more at a later date, just make an appointment with the receptionist."

Dr. Harris' eyes were kind as he looked at Maddie and reached out to shake her hand. She automatically extended her hand to him, but she felt numb inside. The words "*hysterectomy*" and "*no more children*" echoed in her mind.

Maddie arrived back home with no idea how she had gotten out of Dr. Harris' office. All during her ride home in the taxi, her thoughts were a blur. She had to ring the bell when she reached the door to the apartment, since her hands were shaking so that she could not locate her key. Irene opened the door and gasped at the sight of her employer's pale, set face.

"Mrs. Wheeler, are you all right? Do you need to lie down?"

Maddie stared at Irene as if she had never seen her before. Then, shaking her head as if to clear it, she replied, “Yes, that’s what I need. I’m going to lie down and I don’t want to be disturbed.”

“Yes, Mrs. Wheeler.” Irene nodded and went back to her work.

Maddie walked slowly back to her bedroom and turned down the bed. The sob that had been nearly choking her escaped, and she quickly went into the connecting bath and turned on the water so that she couldn’t be overheard. In a few minutes she felt more in control, and threw herself down on the bed after removing her shoes and uncharacteristically dropping her Chanel suit and silk blouse onto the floor. Only then, with a pillow over her head, did she give vent to the great gulping sobs she had been holding in. *So much for my dreams of a big family! Not only did I miss out on my daughter’s first weeks and the breastfeeding I planned, but I’ll never be able to do it over right with another child! And I **don’t** wish Honey was a boy – she is just perfectly perfect the way she is – but I **so** wanted to give Matthew a son to carry on his name and business. Now that will never happen!*

She cried until she had no tears left. Her eyes were swollen nearly shut and she couldn’t breathe through her nose. Exhausted from her storm of crying, she finally fell asleep.

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Matt entered the bedroom quietly, and took note of the scattered clothing. He tiptoed over to Maddie’s side of the bed and looked at her as she slept. In the dimness of early evening he could still see the ravages of her outburst. Irene had told him that Mrs. Wheeler looked ill when she came home from the doctor’s visit and hadn’t been out of her room since. He wondered what the problem could be and felt the prick of fear that he felt each time he remembered her lying in the oxygen tent.

Matt checked his watch. It was six o’clock. Gently, he touched her shoulder and spoke her name. “Maddie, darling. It’s Matt. Wake up and eat supper with me, dearest.”

Maddie awoke with a start. Her puffy eyelids exposed only a slit of her beautiful hazel eyes. “Matt! When did you get home? What time is it?”

“Darling, I just got home. It’s six o’clock and Irene said you’d been in here since you got back from the doctor. What’s wrong, sweetheart?”

She sat up and pushed the hair back from her face. Grimacing slightly, she pressed her hand to her forehead. A dull headache throbbed behind her temples. Finally, she answered him.

“Matt, Dr. Harris told me today that I had to have a hysterectomy after Honey was born. He said he had told me before, but I guess I didn’t remember. Why didn’t you say anything about it to me?”

“Maddie, darling, I knew Dr. Harris had discussed it with you. You never mentioned it and I ... I guess I thought you knew and just didn’t want to talk about it. I ...I really didn’t know what to say. When Honey was born, I was terrified that you were going to die. The hysterectomy was nothing if it meant you would be okay.” He reached out to embrace her, but she held herself stiffly and didn’t respond to his touch.

“Who else knows about this? You haven’t told any of our friends or your business associates, have you?”

“Sweetheart, the only people I told were your mother and sister. I told them not to tell anyone else unless you said they could. I didn’t see any need for our private business to be published in all the gossip columns.”

“Good. Because I couldn’t bear it if I thought people were feeling sorry for me or talking about me behind my back. It’s bad enough to know I can’t have any more children; bad enough that I can’t give you a son to inherit your business. Matt, I don’t want to tell anyone else.”

“I agree completely, darling. There’s no reason for anyone else to know.”

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In the following weeks, Maddie found herself crying for seemingly no reason. She was taking part in some of the social activities her mother assured her were vital for Matt Wheeler's wife, including the organization of a major fundraising dinner to benefit the Sloane Hospital. It continued to prey on her mind that she was not going to be able to have more children. Her life's dream was shattered. She even found herself avoiding opportunities to care for Honey, because the baby was a painful reminder that there could be no more. Despite Dr. Harris' advice to gain weight, she had no appetite, and had to force herself to eat. Likewise she forced herself to walk each evening with Matt as he pushed the baby carriage.

### ***October 10, 1956***

Matt and Maddie strolled along one of the paved paths in Central Park. Maddie was huddled in a long, black swing coat, and although the weather was mild, she kept her hands jammed into the pockets.

"Darling, aren't you too hot in that coat?" Matt asked her.

"No, I'm cold," she replied. "I don't know what's wrong with me. I've always done a lot of things outside, riding and swimming – but this past summer I couldn't bear the heat and now I'm freezing if it's below seventy degrees."

"You're not eating enough. Dr. Harris said you were too thin and wanted you to gain weight. But you haven't gained any that I can see." Matt's troubled green eyes studied her pale, pinched face.

"Matt, I'm trying. I'm just not hungry. I guess I can't do anything right. First I put the nursery in the wrong place. Then I have these horrible complications and I can't even take care of my own child. I've deprived you of the chance for a son and heir to your business. You should get rid of me and find someone who can really help you."

"Maddie, don't talk like that! I love you and you are the only woman I want. You never know, Honey may decide to go into business when she grows up." Matt tried to smile at his joking

comment. Girls didn't go into business! *But, I have to try to help Maddie get over this inferiority complex*, he thought, using a term he had read in a magazine article. *I promised I'd always take care of her, and I will.*

## **11. Baby's First Christmas**

### ***December 13, 1956***

As the Christmas season approached, Maddie continued to feel sad and tired. Although she usually enjoyed Christmas shopping, this year was different. It seemed like just another task to complete. She was trying to get into the spirit as she had the previous year, when she had planned and catered Matt's office Christmas party for the first time. *I was so excited about that party last year*, she thought. *To think, that was even before I knew I was pregnant! It was the first big gathering I ever planned. This year I just called the same caterer and told them to do the same thing; I just had Matt's secretary, Dorothy, circulate a memo about the date, time and location of the party.*

Today she had left Honey with her nurse at the apartment in order to begin shopping for her Christmas gifts. *As much as I dislike having to rely on someone else to care for my child, I'm really lucky to have Mrs. Carter. How could I go shopping or attend charity functions without someone reliable to be with my baby?* she mused.

Maddie pulled the shopping list from her pocket as she neared Macy's department store. "Hmmm, I should be able to find almost everything here," she said aloud, stopping suddenly on the wet sidewalk.

"Hey, lady, watch where you're going!" A shabbily dressed man bumped roughly into Maddie and she nearly lost her footing. Fortunately, the Macy's security guard was only an arm's length away and kept her from falling.

"Watch it, buddy!" he called after the rapidly disappearing stranger.

“I’m all right,” Maddie hastened to assure him. “I wasn’t really paying attention. Thank you for keeping me from falling.” She gave herself a mental shake. *Wake up, Maddie! Think about what you’re doing!* she told herself sternly. *It’s a good thing the guard was paying attention!*

With a sweet smile for him, she steeled herself for the crowd, and walked briskly on into the huge department store. Christmas Muzak surrounded her, and the corners of her mouth lifted in another smile. *Just last week I was annoyed by the Christmas music playing everywhere!*

Her first stop was the bookstore on the lowest level, where she chose books for each person on her list. For Matt it would be *Gideon’s Week*, by John Marric. The highly praised mystery was written under a pseudonym for John Creasey. Dirk was a James Bond fan; Maddie was sure he would enjoy *Diamonds Are Forever*. For her mother – *Peyton Place*? Or would she enjoy *The Last of the Wine*, by Mary Renault? Natalie planned to travel with Dirk when Ben was old enough for school; perhaps she would like *Coast to Coast*, by a Welsh essayist about her American travels. Her eyes lingered on *The One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, by Dodie Smith. *I’m not here to buy presents for myself*, she lectured herself sternly.

A saleslady appeared in front of Maddie and asked, “Is there anything I can help you with, madam?”

“Oh, yes! I’m looking for a picture book for my nephew. He’s two years old. What would you suggest?”

“What about *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*? Or *The Little Engine That Could*? Or, *Curious George* – little boys really like him. We also have *Babar the Elephant*, and *Make Way For Ducklings*.”

Maddie frowned. This might be harder than she had expected – there were so many choices. “I think he already has all of those,” she replied.

“Hmmm, here’s a new one. It’s called *Kenny’s Window*, by Maurice Sendak. It might be a little old for a two-year-old, but

Sendak is a fabulous illustrator and children really relate to his books. He's going to be a major children's author some day."

Maddie skimmed through the book and was entranced by the story of Kenny, whose window becomes a magic portal as he strives to answer seven questions posed to him in a dream. The fantastical illustrations would appeal to Ben as well, she thought.

"I'll take it. Thanks for your help," she told the saleslady. "I just need one more book," she added. "I'm looking for a good, basic cookbook. Our cook has been looking for a new recipe for pumpkin bread."

"I think *The Joy of Cooking* is just what you want. It has a wonderful mix of plain and fancier dishes, as well as explanations of cooking techniques and kitchen essentials. I've made the pumpkin bread myself. It's excellent."

"That sounds like just what I want. Can I have them boxed and delivered to my home?"

"Yes, madam. That can be arranged. Just let the cashier know and he will take care of it for you."

After pointing Maddie in the direction of the cash register, the saleslady turned to help another customer. Maddie could hear her saying, "Nancy Drew? Yes, we have every book in the series right over here. Yes, we do carry Cherry Ames as well – she's just on the shelf above."

After paying for her books and deciding to take *Kenny's Window* with her, Maddie made her way to the infants' and children's clothing department. There she found a black velveteen dress with a white lace collar and a red ribbon rosette, white tights and black patent leather shoes for Honey's Christmas outfit. She bought two outfits, just in case one became soiled.

Moving from one department to another, she purchased new Chanel handbags for her mother and sister, and buttery soft leather gloves for Matt and Dirk. For Matt she also selected a beautiful

cashmere muffler and gold cufflinks. She arranged delivery of a rocking horse for Ben, and for Honey, she chose a bright ball and several educational toys designed for infants.

Matt's secretary would receive a generous bonus, and the Wheelers gave cash bonuses to their staff, so Maddie's shopping was virtually done. She left the store feeling more cheerful than she had in some time.

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Matt wiped a smudge of lipstick from his cheek after an enthusiastic welcome home kiss from his wife the evening of the shopping trip. "You're looking happy today," he commented.

"Matt, I'm beginning to get into the Christmas spirit," Maddie told her husband. "It seems like Christmas music has been playing in the stores since daylight savings time ended, but today I enjoyed it. I found nearly all of the gifts on my list, as well as the cookbook that Cook has been wanting. Look at the picture book I found for Ben!" She took the picture book to him. "Look at the illustrations! This Maurice Sendak will be a very famous author-illustrator some day, just watch!"

Matt looked at the book. "It does look exciting," he commented. "But don't you think Ben's a little young for this? Now, if it was a book about *Where the Wild Things Are*, it would suit Ben to a T." He grinned at his wife. She had not been this animated in a long time.

"I don't like to listen to Christmas music before Thanksgiving," he went on to say. "They seem to start playing it in the elevators of my building before Halloween. But I'm definitely ready for it now. Speaking of Christmas music, I bought the new *White Christmas* album by Bing Crosby today. If you're really in the mood for Christmas music, we can listen to it tonight."

"I'd love it!" Maddie responded. "I'm going to work on Honey's baby book tonight, too. I have some new pictures for the scrapbook pages."

The couple listened to Bing Crosby's Christmas ballads, and talked about their favorite Christmas memories as Maddie worked on the baby book and Matt skimmed through the latest issue of TIME Magazine.

"I'll never forget skating at Rockefeller Center last year," Maddie told her husband. It was just magical. Even though it was crowded, I felt like we were alone in an enchanted fairyland. The air was so clear, and I thought I could actually see some stars."

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### ***December 23, 1956***

"Matt, I'm going to play some different Christmas music now," Maddie announced. She stood at the large console stereo, considering albums with songs sung by Bing Crosby, Nat King Cole, and Perry Como.

"This is the one I want!" she exclaimed, picking up the new album, "*Perry Como Sings Merry Christmas Music*". She slid the 12-inch black disc out of its cardboard sleeve, set it on the turntable's spindle, and turned on the record player. The record plopped softly onto the turntable, and the needle arm hovered over it for a second before settling onto the grooves. As the first strains of "*'Twas the Night Before Christmas*" wafted from the speakers, Maddie sighed happily and danced over to the picture window, where her husband stood, enjoying the sight and scent of the freshly decorated Christmas tree.

Matt held his five-month old daughter in his arms. Honey stared at the bright colored lights on the tree, sucking on her chubby fist. She seemed mesmerized by the multicolored bulbs and flickering silver icicles. Maddie made a face at her daughter and was elated when Honey removed her fist from her mouth and opened it in a toothless grin as she waved her hands and wriggled in her father's arms. As the music continued, Honey began to coo and babble. Maddie took her and sang along with Perry Como as her favorite song, "Winter Wonderland" played.

*"Sleighbells ring, are you listening?  
In the lane, snow is glistening!"*

*A beautiful sight, we're happy tonight,  
Walking in a Winter Wonderland!"*

Honey began to rub her hands over her ears, and fussed as she often did when she was hungry. Matt went to the kitchen to get a bottle, while Maddie settled herself and her daughter in the comfortable armchair.

Honey took her bottle eagerly, as usual, but she kept interrupting her feeding to pull at her left ear.

"Look, Matt, she's discovered her ears!" Maddie was proud of her daughter's intelligence. Just the previous night Honey had captured her own foot and brought it to her mouth.

"Yes, our daughter is precocious," Matt agreed, a wide smile on his face.

After the feeding was completed, Maddie took Honey back to the nursery, where Mrs. Carter had her nightgown and a fresh diaper ready. She surrendered her baby to the nurse with a slight pang of regret, but rejoined Matt in the spacious living room feeling happier than she had felt for several months.

"I think this Christmas will always be special for me," said Matt. "Just the three of us here together! Not that I don't like your family, darling," he hastened to add. "It's just that traveling to Boston at this time of year is no picnic. I hope you're not disappointed, but I'm a little relieved that the snowstorm canceled our travel plans."

"No, I'm not disappointed," Maddie replied. "I don't really enjoy being pulled between Mother and Natalie. No matter what I do, especially with our child, I can't please them both."

She gestured to the pile of presents under the tree. "I've had the gifts for Mother, Natalie, Dirk, and Ben wrapped for a week, and just today I realized I had mislabeled someone's gift. I had to unwrap nearly all of them before I discovered which one was wrong! Now, since we won't be able to travel tomorrow, it doesn't matter nearly so much." She giggled at the memory of Ben's picture book being

labeled “to Mother, from Matt and Maddie.”

“Cook is going to prepare our Christmas dinner early Christmas day, then once it is served, I gave her and Irene leave to do whatever they wanted to for the rest of the day. I’ve given Mrs. Carter leave to visit her mother as well. We will be able to put away the food and load the dishwasher; then we can have a cold supper if we’re hungry later.”

“That sounds like a good plan,” Matt said. “I hope they will be able to spend some time with their families. This weather has changed a lot of people’s plans.”

The two of them were soon ready to turn off the lights and go to bed. Maddie fell asleep quickly for once, but an hour or so later she was awakened by the sound of a baby’s cry. Sitting up in bed, she took a moment to gather her thoughts and realized it was her own child who was crying. Taking a moment to pull on her robe and slippers, she went to the nursery, where she found Mrs. Carter already up and tending to Honey.

“What do you think is the matter with her, Mrs. Carter?” Maddie asked. “Honey doesn’t usually cry like this during the night.”

“I think she has an earache. You see how she’s pulling at that left ear? Besides that, she has a fever.”

Maddie touched her daughter’s skin. “She’s burning up! What can we do?”

“I have some sweet oil drops to put in her ear. That is soothing. I’m going to give her an aspirin suppository. Then I will give her an alcohol rub to bring the temperature down. I hope you will be able to reach her doctor tomorrow. Since it’s Christmas Eve, he’ll probably close the office early.”

“Oh, yes! I’ll call the office the first thing in the morning.” Maddie was frightened. Honey had never been sick before, and now she was burning with fever, crying, her nose was running, and she was rubbing both hands over her face. She picked up her daughter

while Mrs. Carter went to get the suppository and the rubbing alcohol, and tried to comfort her. However, Honey's miserable wails continued in spite of her mother's ministrations. Maddie felt guilty for missing the signs of illness. *To think I thought Honey was merely discovering her ear!*

Once more, she felt incompetent as Mrs. Carter took Honey from her and placed several drops of sweet oil in each ear, popped a suppository into her bottom, and then stripped the baby and rubbed her back with rubbing alcohol. After fifteen minutes or so had passed, Honey's cries had subsided and she drank some water from her bottle. Maddie stayed and watched as the experienced older woman ministered to her child, then finally went back to bed since it appeared she wasn't needed.

### ***December 24, 1956***

Indeed, the Wheelers' pediatrician's office was open for only half of the day on Christmas Eve. Fortunately, Maddie was able to get an appointment, and she accompanied Mrs. Carter when the car service arrived to transport them to the doctor's office. Honey continued to fuss each time she was laid flat, and turned her face away from the bottle after taking a few sucks. Only Mrs. Carter could comfort her enough to get her to sleep. Maddie nearly cried when the doctor gave Honey an injection of penicillin in her thigh, and the baby's piercing shrieks did not abate until finally her voice gave out on the trip home.

"Matt, I'm the most incompetent mother in the world," she sobbed to her husband. "I never dreamed she was sick. Why didn't I know there was something wrong with her?"

"How could you have known?" Matt was practical. Honey's crying disturbed him as much as it did Maddie, but he didn't see it as a failure on his part. "We're lucky to have such a good nurse."

Maddie shuddered as she made the effort to stop crying. "I just feel so stupid. I've never been so slow at learning things. I studied Dr. Spock until I nearly had his book memorized. Yet, I can't seem to do anything right with my baby!"

## ***12. New Year, New Horizons***

### ***January 1957***

After Christmas, Matt Wheeler noticed that his wife was only going through the motions in her day-to-day activities. Honey's illness had frightened her, and not knowing what to do had frightened her even more. Maddie seemed to be afraid to spend time with her child in case she did something wrong, or missed a problem. She had yet to regain the weight she had lost in the hospital and her appetite was nonexistent. While she had always reminded him of the beautiful film star, Grace Kelly, she was beginning to resemble the waiflike Audrey Hepburn.

He racked his brain to think of something that would help return her to the healthy outdoor-loving girl he had begun dating when they were both working as camp counselors.

Toward the end of January, he received a letter from Francois Martin, a Swiss hotelier who had sought Matthew's financial support when he wished to buy a hotel in Genoa, Italy. Matt had made a major investment in the property, and now Francois was inviting him to come to Genoa, on the Italian Riviera, and see how his investment was faring.

*"...my good friend, if it were not for your help, my family could not have obtained this property. But thanks to you, we were able to purchase it, and I think you will be pleased to see how your investment has prospered. I invite you and your lovely wife to be my guests in the first week of March, for Carnival.*

*Please give my regards to your lovely Madeleine, and I hope to see you both soon.*

*Francois Martin  
L'Hotel Suisse"*

Matthew rubbed his chin thoughtfully. *This could be just the thing, he thought. I have business in Rome, Milan, Florence, and Naples, so I need to make a European trip anyway.*

Carefully, he considered the best way to suggest to Maddie that she should go with him. He jotted down several ideas that seemed promising.

“Maddie, I need your help,” he began as they sat in the living room after supper. “I have to fly to Italy next month. There will be meetings in several different cities related to company business, and I’ll need an interpreter for most of them.”

“How can I help?” Maddie asked. “Can’t Dorothy hire an interpreter to travel with you?”

“She could. But here’s what I was thinking. Why don’t you go with me? You’re fluent in Italian, and you studied all of that art history besides. You could be my interpreter, and we could get in some sightseeing.” He was going to continue, but Maddie interrupted him.

“Matt, you’re crazy! I don’t know anything about business. I might make a hash of everything. How long will the trip last, anyway?”

“We’ll be traveling all over the country, since I have meetings in Rome, Milan, Florence, and Naples, and we’d be gone for three to four weeks. I’d miss you terribly if you stayed here, darling! And the Italians would love you. We could take it easy, spend a few days in each city. You’d have plenty of free time to shop or sightsee. And before we come back, we’ve been invited to spend a week at a hotel on the Italian Riviera where I have an investment.”

“I see. You’re making it sound very appealing – and of course I’d miss you, too. Well, I’m sure the Italian weather is much nicer than New York weather right now. I certainly wouldn’t have to worry about leaving Honey in Mrs. Carter’s care while I was gone. Let me think about it and I’ll let you know tomorrow.”

Matt knew when to drop a subject. Maddie would need some time to mull over this idea, but at least she wasn’t totally negative toward it.

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“Darling, if you really think I could help you, I’ll go to Italy with you,” Maddie told him the following morning. “I won’t be just a pretty face and a conversationalist, though. I want you to bring me home some information on the business we’ll be doing, so I can anticipate some questions and answers that might come up.”

“I’ll have Dorothy make up a packet for you on the different meetings, with a file on each company and the top executives. You’ll have two and a half weeks to study the materials.”

As soon as Matt left for the office, Maddie went to the study, where her college textbooks were shelved, and pulled her Italian dictionary, as well as a grammar and vocabulary text. She had always been a conscientious student who believed in being prepared for exams. *If I’m going to serve as Matt’s interpreter, I need to make a good impression on the Italian executives, so I’ll prepare myself as if it were another exam. I don’t want Matt to be ashamed of me!*

She reviewed grammar and sentence structure, practiced everyday phrases, and played some Italian language records to accustom her ear to the sounds of spoken Italian at a conversational pace. It wasn’t long before she began to feel comfortable with the language she had studied intensively in college.

By the time Matt arrived from the office with his packet, she felt ready to converse at a tourist level. She greeted him at the door. “*Buona sera, Signore. Vuole qualcosa da mangiare? Vuole qualcosa da bere?*” (Good evening, sir. Would you like something to eat? Would you like something to drink?)

That evening, she located her passport. It was easy to find, since the Wheelers had gone to Paris for their honeymoon just a year and a half earlier.

In the following days, Maddie studied her packet and went to the library to research the companies included in the trip’s agenda. She even visited her Italian professor at Radcliffe for extra practice in speaking Italian and using correct business terminology.

Finally, she visited her hairdresser and purchased several new outfits at Bergdorf Goodman. She would need both daytime suits and evening gowns, and the store had an *atelier* of Sorelle Fontana designs. Maddie wanted to make a good impression on her Italian hosts by wearing designs from the Italian couturier who had dressed Princess Grace of Monaco, Jacqueline Kennedy, Ava Gardner, and Audrey Hepburn.

At the end of two and a half weeks, Maddie felt that she was as ready as she could possibly be.

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Matt and Maddie's trip was a great success for Wheeler International. Everywhere they went, the Italians congratulated Matt on his beautiful and intelligent wife. He began introducing himself as "the man who accompanied Madeleine Wheeler to Italy."

Maddie found, to her surprise, that she thoroughly enjoyed the business meetings. "It's such a challenge – it really makes me think and concentrate on what I'm doing. I feel as if I'm finally putting my education to some use," she told her husband. As Matt had promised, there was also plenty of time for sightseeing and shopping, and Maddie was able to find quite a few presents to buy for Honey, as well as gifts for her mother and Natalie and her family. Each time she saw a baby, she missed her own child, but she reminded herself that Honey was in capable and loving hands.

The beautiful countryside was healing to her spirit, and the mild weather was such a pleasant contrast to cold, damp New York that she quite enjoyed walking along the piazzas with Matt in the evenings. As a result, her appetite improved and she regained some attractive color in her complexion.

### ***March 12, 1957***

"Oh, I've enjoyed this trip so much, Matt," Maddie told her husband on their last night at L'Hotel Suisse. Thank you for suggesting I could help you. But I can't wait to be back home with our daughter! Darling, do you suppose Honey will have forgotten us?"

She felt anxious; they had been away for just over three weeks.

“Of course not,” Matt responded. “But if she has trouble readjusting, we’ll be able to spend plenty of time with her when we get home. She’ll soon get used to us again.” Matt didn’t want to admit it, but he was worried, too. This was the first time since Honey’s birth that he had gone more than twelve hours without seeing and touching his beautiful baby daughter.

### ***March 14, 1957***

The Wheelers let themselves into their apartment, and after removing their coats, went straight to the nursery, impatient to see their daughter.

Eight-month-old Honey was sitting unassisted on the changing table as Mrs. Carter combed her hair. She was cooing and playing patty-cake while Mrs. Carter recited the words to the old nursery rhyme. Matt coughed to get the nurse’s attention, and she turned around to greet her employers with a pleasant smile. Maddie noticed that she kept a hand on Honey as she turned away from her.

“Welcome home! I hope you had a good trip,” she said. “I wasn’t sure what time you’d arrive, but Honey has just had her bath and gotten dressed. Look, sweetheart, here are your mama and daddy!” She lifted the baby in her arms and turned her to face her parents.

Maddie stepped forward, eager to hold her child. Honey stared at her for a moment with an uncertain smile, but when Maddie reached out her arms to take her, she turned her face away from her mother, clung to her nurse, and began to cry.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Wheeler. I think she’s reached that ‘stranger awareness’ phase,” the older woman apologized. She tried to loosen Honey’s grip on her sleeve, but the baby kept her face averted from her parents.

Matt put an arm around his wife’s waist. He could see that she was struggling with tears. “Come, darling, let’s get out of these travel clothes. We’ll give her a little time to get used to us again.” He led Maddie back to their bedroom, trying not to let her see that he was

equally shaken.

The rest of the day, Honey remained wary around her parents. Although she would look at them without crying, she would not allow them to feed her, change her, or even hold her. Maddie felt rejected by her daughter, although she was able to visualize the exact page in Dr. Spock's book where he discussed developmental changes related to "stranger-awareness." She had awakened to a new interest during her trip with Matt. She had succeeded in the task he had asked of her; the task she had set herself. Here was something she could do well! To accompany Matt on more business travels would mean spending more time away from her child. *But Honey didn't miss me! She loves Mrs. Carter, and Mrs. Carter knows how to take care of her better than I do!*

Maddie's heart was heavy in her chest. It was hard to draw a deep breath. *Maybe I don't have to choose now, but I will have to choose between being with my husband or my child soon. How can I choose between them?*

She picked up the baby book she had been keeping for Honey and opened it. As she stared at the pages, which so carefully recorded her child's infancy, a few tears fell onto the pages.

### **13. Mother and Daughter**

#### ***Back to the present ... September, 1972***

As the full moon rose in the night sky, Maddie and Honey still sat together on the chaise lounge, leafing through the pages of the baby book. Each milestone of Honey's development was carefully documented in her mother's neat boarding-school script. A few snapshots and several studio portraits were mounted into the book as well. On the last page there was a 5x7 color portrait of Honey and her mother at Easter time when Honey appeared to be about three years old. Honey wore a white dress with large sage-green polka dots, white Mary Janes and white lace-edged anklets. In her hair was a sage-green ribbon, and she held a basket of pastel Easter eggs. Maddie, seated behind her, wore a sage-green dress with white polka dots. Maddie looked longingly at her child, while Honey had a

solemn look on her small face as she stared straight ahead at the camera.

“Mother! You look so sad!” Honey exclaimed. “I’ve seen this picture before – it’s on Daddy’s desk. But you don’t look sad in that one.”

“I was afraid that you would never love me and I would never really know you,” her mother replied. “I felt useful and needed when I traveled with your dad. When I was at home with you, I felt helpless and unnecessary. Mrs. Carter was so competent and capable, and she loved you dearly. I always felt she didn’t really want to share you with me. Yet, we needed her and I could never bring myself to let her go; I was sad to lose her when you went to school. It was true that there were things I needed to do to help your father and I couldn’t have done them without her – or someone like her. Being a social hostess for Dad was my job. I knew that when I married him. But our business travels made us real partners. In some ways, I wish things could have been different, but that was the life I knew, and the life I was given. I’m just terribly sorry you and I could never seem to be closer. I envy Mrs. Belden and Mrs. Lynch for their relationships with their daughters.”

“Oh, Mother! I can barely remember Mrs. Carter! I’m so thankful I got sick and we moved out here,” Honey blurted out. “If we had stayed in the city we might *never* have gotten to know each other. Do you think we could make regular plans to do something together?”

“Honey, darling, I would love to do something with you regularly. What kind of activity do you have in mind?” Maddie asked.

“Well, there is going to be a class in White Plains every Saturday for the next two months, called ‘Choosing the fashion fabric for your sewing project’,” Honey responded. “I’ve been thinking about redecorating my room, and I’d love to make my own curtains and even a comforter and some throw pillows. With your perfectly perfect style sense, I’m sure we could choose fabrics that would look beautiful, but we might need some help in choosing some that are both beautiful and will hold up for several years. I don’t want to put a lot of time and effort into sewing curtains and bedspreads that will

fade and break down in sunlight, or stain easily, and I do want colors and patterns that make me feel happy! Once I go to the work of sewing these things, I'd want to enjoy them for a long time! Later, if we like the class, I'd love to learn more about choosing the right types of fabric to make my own clothing. I've found out with a few projects that sometimes the fabric I've chosen doesn't hang the right way for the style the designer intended, and I'd also love to design some of my own clothes. You have such perfect taste that I know you would give me the best advice in colors and styles."

Again, Honey noticed her mother's eyes filling with tears. In a soft voice that only trembled a little, she answered her daughter. "Honey, dear, it sounds like a fascinating class. I'd love to attend with you."

Hesitantly, she reached for her daughter. The baby book lay open on the bed, forgotten, as mother and daughter hugged each other and cried together.

*finis*

## ***Author's notes***

*Word count: 22,545*

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**Thank you to Cathy**, for starting Jixemitri. Without you, this story would never have been written.

**Thanks to Misty**, who gave me my first story home on the internet, with her Trixiefic site. Your encouragement means so much to me!

**Many thanks to my three wonderful editors, Trish, Ryl, and Ronda**, who encouraged me every step of the way, and made much-appreciated suggestions which improved the final product!

**Molto, molto grazie to the lovely and talented El\_**, who offered me space on her site and designed and formatted the beautiful page you see. Your work enhanced my words, and it is *bellissima*!

I also want to thank the lovely Mary C. and Susan, whose stories inspired this one. Mary C.'s *The Wonder of Christmas*, and *Estate of Mind*, started me thinking about the roots of Maddie's and Honey's relationship and guided my thoughts in many ways. Susan's *A Time To Kill*, *A Time To Heal* had a poignant moment when Matt tells Honey about the first time he held her. Again, although

my story is different, the view of Matt's and Honey's bonding experience influenced me deeply.

The characters of Matthew and Madeleine Wheeler, and Ben Riker, belong to Random House, although RH hasn't done much with them. No profit is being made from their appearance in this story. Likewise, no profit is being made from my unauthorized use of other characters from the Trixie Belden series.

I did quite a bit of research on childbirth in the 1950s, and if anyone wants more information on placenta abruptio or DIC, I will be happy to send you some URLs. Clotting factors had not then been isolated, so survival was even more iffy than it is today. Both of these conditions remain serious complications of childbirth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

My Dr. Fielding Harris is a fictional character, but I did name him in honor of a real Dr. Harry Fields, who is famous for saying (about Twilight Sleep): "My patients want to have babies, they just don't want to be there." -- Harry Fields, circa 1950

The hospital nurses in my story share surnames with some real nurses I have known, but my characters are not meant to resemble any real person. Nurses really do hide hypodermics behind their backs when dealing with confused, irrational adults! Mrs. Carter is a figment of my imagination.

Dr. Young, the hospital psychiatrist, was named in honor of Carl Jung, whose theory of personality has had major influence on the discipline of psychiatry.

The Majestic is a real luxury apartment building bordering Central Park, where Matt and Maddie may have lived in the early years of their marriage. Thank you, Anna, for the suggestion and links!

It's true that sliding a diaper pin through your hair will help the pin slide through a cloth diaper more easily. (today's trivia tidbit!)

The New York City Ballet did go on a 10-week European tour in August of 1956.

The Sloane Hospital in NYC is real; today it is a part of the Columbia-Presbyterian Hospitals. It is well-known for its department of obstetrics.

The Guggenheim Museum was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1956.

Chapter 11 was written as a 2005 Holiday CWP. The elements are:

- *Pumpkin bread – recipe in the cookbook Maddie buys*
- *Muzak - at stores and in Matt's office building*
- *Mislabeled gifts - Maddie mislabels Ben's gift*

- *Daylight Saving Time – 4/29/56-9/30/56 – it seems they have been playing Christmas music in the stores since Daylight Savings Time ended*
- *People discussing when it's appropriate to start listening to Christmas music – Matt and Maddie discuss this - “I think they started playing Christmas music in the stores as soon as Daylight Savings time ended.”*
- *Scrapbook - Maddie is making a baby book for Honey*
- *Lipstick smudges – Maddie leaves smudges on Matt’s cheeks*
- *A blizzard or snowstorm – a snowstorm in upstate NY keeps the Wheelers from traveling to Boston for Christmas*
- *Ice skates – Maddie talks about ice skating on Rockefeller Center last year*
- *Trying to organize something big (a move, a wedding, an anniversary party) coming into the holiday season, when everyone is super busy – Maddie arranges a catered party for Matt’s office staff*
- *Book: Where the Wild Things Are – The 1<sup>st</sup> dummy for this book was created by Sendak in 1956 – he was dissatisfied with the pics and story and set it aside. Finally published in 1963, it won the Caldecott medal. With Kenny's Window in 1956, Sendak began the exploration of the psychological fears and yearnings of childhood -- specifically, those of his own childhood: ". . . to write about how one felt as a child was something new” (Bader 506). Maddie buys Kenny’s Window for Ben, and Matt tells her, “he needs to write one called “Where The Wild Things Are”*
- *NOTE: You must use a carryover item from a previous CWP.*
- *2004 Holiday CWP elements (carryovers)*
- *A holiday themed mystery book title – Maddie sees One Hundred and One Dalmatians in the store (pub in 1956) the story takes place in the days just before Christmas*
- *A new recipe or a food new to a character – see pumpkin bread*
- *A New Outfit - Maddie buys Honey a new outfit*

The books Maddie chooses for Christmas gifts were all bestselling titles from 1956. According to my internet research, Bing Crosby did release an album entitled “White Christmas” in 1956. Perry Como’s album, *Perry Como Sings Merry Christmas Music*, was also released in 1956.

The treatment Honey received for fever was standard in 1956. However, it is outmoded today. Children under age 16 should *never* be given aspirin for fever, because of the association with Reye's syndrome; alcohol rubs should *never* be used to treat fever, as the alcohol could be absorbed through the skin into the bloodstream. Instead, Tylenol (acetaminophen) or ibuprofen (if the child is 6 months old or older) and lukewarm sponge baths should be used if treating a fever. I don't know if sweet oil is still available today – I've never used it. You shouldn't put any kind of drops into an ear which has a ruptured eardrum unless specifically prescribed by a doctor.

Dr. Benjamin Spock was THE guru of pediatrics for mothers during the 1950s. His book, *Baby and Child Care*, was first published in 1946, just in time for the post-World War II baby boom, and became a widely-accepted "bible" on child rearing. Pediatrician Spock encouraged new parents to use common sense and to treat children with respect. This led some critics to call him the "Father of Permissiveness," in spite of Spock's protests to the contrary. In the 1960s Spock gained new fame as a pacifist and Vietnam War protester. He regularly updated the book up until around 1980 at least. He was a great proponent of learning your own child's personality and treating each child as an individual.

L'Hotel Suisse is a real hotel, and was purchased by a Swiss family in the early 1950s. I don't know the family's real name, and Matt Wheeler was not an investor ;-).

Macy's and Bergdorf Goodman are well-known New York department stores.

Italian fashion designers first achieved prominence in the 1950s; Sorelle Fontana was one of the earliest successful Italian design firms which catered to women. The Italian fashion industry was originally centered in Rome, although Milan is now the seat of Italian couture.

Matt's calling himself "the man who accompanied Madeleine Wheeler to Italy" is meant to reflect President Kennedy's comment when he took Jacqueline, his wife, with him to Paris to meet with Charles DeGaulle, the French premier. The French weren't the biggest fans of the U.S. Jackie was young, beautiful, and charming; she was fluent in French and was also known as a fashionable dresser who patronized the best designers. For this trip I am almost sure she wore creations of French couturiers, and of course she spoke excellent French. DeGaulle was charmed by her. JFK introduced himself as "the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris."