

Snapshots

September 18, 1945

“Margaret is a foster-kid! Margaret is a foster-kid!”

The taunts echoed in Margaret Mitchell’s ears as she ran to put distance between herself and her tormentors. It was the ten-year-old’s first day at her new school, Sleepyside Grade School. She had recently moved from White Plains to the village of Sleepyside-on-Hudson with her foster family, and it was difficult for the shy girl to introduce herself to others. She had arrived alone, eaten lunch alone, and was now walking home alone. Although she had determined not to cry, a tear fell from one eye. Then, in a steady trickle, one tear after another escaped until she could hardly see.

I’ve just got a little farther to go, and then I’ll be home. Why, oh, why, did the teacher have to tell the class that I’m a foster kid? Her wandering thoughts diverted her attention from the uneven sidewalk, and Margaret suddenly found herself sprawled on the hard surface, her books and papers scattered. As she scrambled frantically to gather her school things, she noticed that one knee was bleeding from a scrape, and finally she let out a strangled sob. She didn’t even notice that someone had run up and was helping her pick up her things.

“Margaret! Are you all right?” The speaker was a lively red-haired girl who Margaret remembered from her classroom. She was panting from the exertion of running after the new girl. “I’m Kay Lynch. I sit two rows over from you. This is my brother, Eddie. Eddie, can you carry Margaret’s books? She’s hurt her knee.”

Margaret looked up – her face wet with tears and her eyes already puffy from crying – and saw the slightly taller boy standing next to Kay. Eddie Lynch had black hair, freckles, and bright blue eyes. He reached down a strong hand and helped her to stand. Kay made a tsk,

tsk sound and reached into her skirt pocket to pull out a handkerchief, which she tied around the scraped knee.

“Come over to our house for a few minutes. It’s close by, and my mom can bandage it properly for you. Besides, she said she was going to make oatmeal cookies today.” Eddie smiled, revealing a deep dimple on each side of his friendly, open face. He pulled his own handkerchief from his pocket and used it to dry her tears. “Don’t cry. Everyone here isn’t like those guys.” He cast a scornful look back at the small group of boys, who were sidling away in the opposite direction.

Margaret gave Eddie an answering smile. *He is the nicest boy I’ve ever met.* “Okay, I’ll come. But I’ll have to call my mom and tell her where I am. I won’t be able to stay for long,” she replied.

Kay stood and brushed off her hands. “There, that’s better, Margaret. I wanted to ask you to sit with me at lunchtime, but I didn’t see you in the cafeteria line. Where did you go?”

“Oh, I brought my lunch. Mom says the school lunch is too expensive. I ate in the classroom with the other kids who brought their lunches.” Her cheeks burned as she remembered the boys who had pointed and snickered as she choked down a sandwich, an apple, and a glass of milk at her desk. I don’t know why they were laughing at me – their lunches weren’t any better than mine!

“Gosh! There’s only two kids in the class who bring their lunch, and they’re those horrible boys who were calling you names. You bring your lunch to the cafeteria and eat with me from now on. I’ll talk to the teacher; she won’t care.”

“Really?” Margaret felt a glimmer of happiness. *Maybe I will have a friend, after all.*

October 27, 1945

Margaret ran all the way from the chilly back room where the ironing board was set up to answer the ringing phone in the front

hallway. Forcing herself to speak slowly and clearly, she answered as she had been trained to do. “Hello, this is the Mitchell residence, Margaret speaking.”

“Margaret, this is Kay. Eddie, Terry and I are going to the movie at the Cameo this afternoon. We’re seeing the matinee of *Three Caballeros*. Can you come with us?”

“Let me ask my mom. I’ve done all of my chores today, even the ironing. I *know* there were two dozen handkerchiefs!” Hugging herself with pleased anticipation, Margaret trotted off to find her mom. Kay had been as good as her word. She had obtained permission for Margaret to eat her lunch in the cafeteria, with Kay and the other girls. More than that, she had become the best friend Margaret had never known, inviting her to come over after school – even to spend the night on the occasional Friday or Saturday. The Lynch home was always full to bursting with their noisy, active children. Eddie was the oldest, at twelve; next came Kay, then Terry, who was nine. A gap of two years separated Terry from the twins, Charlotte and Caroline, and the baby, Barbara, was four. Treats like seeing a movie didn’t happen too often, but in addition to Eddie’s paper route, the three eldest Lynches had earned some pocket money raking leaves for elderly neighbors. Margaret had done the same for her next-door neighbor and was in possession of the princely sum of fifty cents.

“Kay, she said yes!” Margaret was almost dancing. It was sometimes lonely in the Mitchell home – the couple had three grown children of their own, and had raised four foster children. But the others were older teens, and they were too busy with their own school activities and jobs to have much time for Margaret.

February 14, 1948

“Margaret, did you know your name is the same as the lady who wrote *Gone With The Wind*?”

“Oh, yes! People are always asking me when I’m going to write another book – that’s not as funny after the first ten times you hear it!

My real last name is Wilson. But all of the Mitchells' foster kids use their name because it makes it easier for the school and all. My mom and dad died when I was a baby, and I don't remember them. I think when I grow up I'd like to learn more about my real parents, but I'm not sure where I would go to find out anything. I don't even know what their names were."

"That's horrible! I can't even imagine not having any real family! Kindhearted Kay's eyes filled with tears. "Although sometimes I do wish I was an only child! No really, Margie, we have a lot of cousins, aunts and uncles. Even the Delanoys are kind of related to us. Mrs. Delanoy's cousin married a cousin of my mom's."

"Well, someday when Eddie and I get married, I suppose all of your relatives will be my relatives. Then I'll be part of a real family."

May 26, 1951

Ed Lynch and Margaret Mitchell were taking a break from dancing to the music of the White Plains Dance Band. It was Ed's senior prom.

"Oh, Eddie, I can't believe you'll be going so far away at the end of the summer."

"I can't either, Margie-girl. But there's no way I can go to college without this scholarship. I can't pass it up."

"Cornell! I just know you'll meet loads of beautiful college girls there. And they'll be so much smarter than me."

"I can't imagine that there are girls prettier than you at Cornell. And don't tell me you're not smart. No other girl dresses as stylishly as you, and I know you don't have a lot of money to spend on clothes. You sure know how to manage the money you make from your job at Crimper's. Besides, I certainly don't think there are very many pretty female engineering students." He smiled. "Now wipe that frown off of your face. We're going to dance and have fun tonight, and we have the whole summer to spend time together. As soon as I do finish

college, we'll get married, and we'll be together for the rest of our lives."

"Listen, Ed! It's our song," exclaimed Margaret. "Sentimental Me."

Ed swung her into his arms as the notes of the song started up.

*Sentimental me
Guess I'll always be
So in love with you
Don't know what to do
Sentimental me*

*Dreaming while I live
Living just to give
All my love to you
No one else will do
Sentimental me*

September 20, 1951

Dear Margie-girl,

How are you doing? I hope your cold is better. Have you and Kay seen the new movie *A Streetcar Named Desire*, yet? It's supposed to be really good. I am using the brief case you gave me every day. It's perfect for keeping my papers together.

School is great! I'm in a study group with some other engineering students. We study together two nights a week. It helps if someone missed a point in the lecture – someone else may have written it down. We also help each other when we get stumped on a problem.

There is a lot of walking to do, so it's great for keeping in shape. The cafeteria food is pretty tasty. I'm working at the campus library for 12 hours a week as part of my scholarship award. If we're not busy, I can open my books and study, so that's good.

Our study group is planning a camping trip this weekend, since we should have nice weather. I think it will be a lot of fun.

I miss you a lot and can't wait until Christmas break so I can see you again. I don't think I'll be able to come home for Thanksgiving.

All my love,
Ed

May 2, 1952

Dear Ed,

I'm so glad the school year is nearly over. It will be wonderful to have you back home again. You asked me to invite a boy to the Prom, so I wouldn't have to miss it. Well, there just aren't any boys I want to date except you, and I wouldn't want to give anyone the wrong impression. But Kay is going with Andy Belden, and you know Mart Johnson is a buddy of his. I'm sure you know him, he graduated last year and is Helen's and Alicia's brother. Kay thought it would be fun if the four of us double dated for the prom. Mart is funny even though I don't understand half of what he says, and he goes back and forth to the city every day for school, so he's at home now. I thought about it for a long time, and decided I will do it. I can wear my prom dress from last year and Mother Mitchell said that if I don't buy a new dress, she and Dad Mitchell will buy me a corsage.

Love,
Margaret

August 10, 1952

"Margie-girl, I've got some bad new and some good news. Which do you want to hear first?"

Margaret stared at her boyfriend. Ed looked unusually serious. His bright blue eyes were dark and clouded with some unknown

feeling. He was pale and his thick black hair was damp, with fresh comb-marks.

“Tell me the bad news, Ed. Whatever it is, we’ll face it together.” She was almost afraid to hear what Ed had to say.

“I’m not going back to school.”

“Ed! Why not? You’re doing so well – I saw your name in the Sun for the Dean’s list. And your scholarship – I thought it covered everything.”

“It does cover everything. But you know, since Dad was hurt in that accident last month, he hasn’t been able to work. He’s going to need an operation and I need to get a job and earn some money to support my family.” Ed squared his shoulders and took her hand. “I don’t want to talk about it, Margie. My mind is made up, and that’s it.”

“All right, Eddie.” Margaret knew exactly how much Ed loved his classes and how he dreamed of earning his college degree. *Maybe not now, but someday ... someday, he’ll go back to school. I’ll do anything I can to help him.*

Her thoughts filled with Ed’s bad news, she suddenly remembered something else. “Ed, you said you had good news, too. What was the good news?” She lifted her hand to push back an unruly lock of his hair.

“Well ... the good news is ... we’ll be able to spend a lot more time together, since I’ll be around here. We can get married next year when you graduate, instead of waiting three more years. That is, if you’ll still have me.”

Margaret threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. “Oh, I hate that you aren’t going back to school, Ed! I hate it for you, because I know how much you want it. But oh! Of course I’ll still marry you, and I’m thrilled that we can get married sooner!”

Ed crushed her to him and their unspoken communication continued for a very long time.

June 20, 1953

“Do I look all right?” Margaret fidgeted before the small mirror above the dresser in her room. “Are my seams straight? My slip isn’t showing, is it?”

Kay Lynch cocked her head to one side and looked her friend up and down. Margaret’s black curls were restrained by a fine black snood, and a perky royal blue hat with a clutch of veiling capped them. She wore a touch of discreetly applied makeup. Thick black eyelashes and a hint of rouge emphasized the delphinium blue of her eyes. Her royal blue suit had a double-breasted jacket with a rolled shawl collar over a slim matching skirt. It set off Margaret’s slender but curvaceous figure to a T. On the suit’s lapel she had pinned her wedding corsage of white roses and baby’s breath. Kay quickly knelt down as she detected a twist in the seam of one of Margaret’s stockings. She straightened it and shook her head in amazement as she noted that her friend’s royal blue heels matched her suit exactly.

“Where did you find such a perfectly matched pair of shoes?”

Margaret giggled. “It was pure coincidence. Well, you know, I was cleaning out the storage room at Crimper’s, and I found some boxes of shoes. There were at least a dozen pairs. I suppose they went out of season, and then the next year, styles changed and they weren’t put back out. Then, things got piled on top of them and they were forgotten. I went through them, because I had already picked out this suit. I never dreamed I would find the perfect color in a style that looked all right. Mr. Crimper said I could have any of the shoes in that group for the box price, and since they were probably ten years old, the price was low. I picked out a black pair and a red pair, too.”

“Don’t you wish you could have a church wedding, with the white dress, veil, and everything?” Kay was slightly wistful. As her best friend’s maid of honor, she would have liked to wear a pretty ballerina-length bridesmaid’s dress, even though she knew her

parents really couldn't have afforded to spend much money on wedding finery. Her best violet two-piece suit would have to do. After checking carefully to be sure no stray slip-edge was showing beneath Margaret's hem, she stood and straightened her own hat before the mirror.

"In a way I do. But it would be so expensive. My foster parents wouldn't have paid for all that, even if they could have afforded it. Really, this will be better. Ed and I can use the money we might have spent on a wedding to buy furniture and things we need to set up housekeeping. Since I'm not Catholic, we couldn't have a church wedding, with a Mass and everything. This way, we won't have to pay rent on a hall and buy food for a hundred people."

"You're right, of course. But getting married in the rectory with just our family present seems so boring."

"Your brother is the most wonderful guy in the world, and I'm so lucky to be marrying him. We'll be married in the eyes of God and the Church, and that's all that counts." Margaret's eyes sparkled as she clasped her best friend's hands.

June 1955

Margaret Lynch twisted her hand as she sat in the small consultation room of Doctor Ferris's office.

"Doctor Ferris, is there something wrong with me? My husband and I have ... um... relations ... um, regularly. But nothing has happened! We've been married for two years." Margaret dabbed at her eyes with the small handkerchief she pulled from her purse.

"Mrs. Lynch, I can't tell you why you haven't become pregnant yet. I don't see anything on your exam that would keep you from conceiving. You and your husband are both young and healthy. Give it time."

December 15, 1955

“Thank you, nurse.” Margaret hung up the phone and spoke aloud. “Oh! Ed will be so happy!”

Jumping up from the chair where she had been sitting, she hurried to put the finishing touches on her dinner of meatloaf with gravy, mashed potatoes, peas, and raw carrot sticks. When Ed walked in the door promptly at six o’clock, everything was ready to serve. She nearly ran to the door to greet him, throwing her arms around his neck and then pulling his face to hers for a passionate kiss.

“Ed! Can you believe it – after all this time – we’re going to have a baby!”

Ed lifted his wife and swung her around the small living room. “Margie-girl! That’s wonderful!”

He began to sing the words of their song.

*Reaching for the moon
And wishing on a star
On my honeymoon
I want to be where you are*

*Darling, can't you see
It was meant to be
I'm in love with you
Say you love me too
Sentimental me*

June 28, 1956

Ed Lynch strode purposefully through the halls of Sleepyside General Hospital until he reached the maternity ward. Entering his wife’s room, he leaned over the hospital bed to give her a kiss. In one hand he held a bouquet of red roses.

“Isn’t she beautiful!” Margaret cradled her newborn daughter in her arms.

“She looks just like you, darling. What shall we name her?” Ed touched the silky black hair with a gentle finger and admired the tiny, delicate fingers.

“I’ve always thought Diana was the most beautiful name in the world. Like Diana in *Anne of Green Gables*.”

“Diana it is, then. What about a middle name?”

“Your mother’s name is Katherine, and Kay has been my best friend ever since I moved to Sleepyside. Don’t you think Diana Katherine sounds nice? We can call her Diana Kay if we want to.”

“Margie-girl, that sounds great. I know Mom and Kay will be tickled that you named the baby after them.”

August, 1956

“Margaret, I’ve decided on something. Come sit on my lap while I tell you about it.” Ed had just put baby Diana to bed after Margaret nursed her.

“Ed, you didn’t have to do the dishes. I would have done them after the baby was in bed.” Margaret leaned her head against her husband’s chest and put a hand up to stroke his stubbly cheek. “I know you’ve had a long day and you’re tired.”

“You’ve worked just as hard as I have,” Ed told her. “The apartment is spic and span, you had a delicious meal ready for me when I got home, and I know you’ve been to the Laundromat today. I don’t see how you did all of that and took care of our daughter, too.”

“Well, it was a challenge, getting to the Laundromat with the baby. I put a pillow down in my wicker clothesbasket and laid Diana in it, then I put the other clothesbasket full of dirty clothes into the car. Then I drained the water from the diaper pail and put it in the car. Then I put Diana in her basket in the car. We were there for about three hours, and I did everything in reverse when the clothes were

clean and folded. I still need to sprinkle the things that need ironing and put them in my sprinkling bag to iron tomorrow.”

“Darling, you shouldn’t have to work so hard. We’ll find another apartment that has a laundry room in the building.” Ed pulled her closer to him and inhaled the fragrance of baby powder that clung to her.

“Ed, it’s all right. Unless the laundry room was right in the apartment, it would be just as much work. Especially if we have more kids.”

“That brings me to my decision. Margie-girl, I’m going back to college in January. There are night classes offered at the Westchester Community College in White Plains, and I’ve talked to the director of admissions there. I can take a class one night a week and earn three hours of credit each semester. In three or four years I can earn an associate’s degree at White Plains. Once I have that, I can apply to complete a bachelor’s degree, with higher level classes somewhere else – probably in the city. It’ll take a long time, but the academic advisor assured me that I could eventually earn my degree if I stick with it.”

“Oh! That’s wonderful! I’ve always thought it was a shame that you had to leave school so early. You’re so smart.” Margaret kissed her husband to emphasize her words.

“I can probably rework my route to end up in White Plains on class day. I’d be getting home about three hours later on that one night. And on weekends I’d have to spend a lot of time studying. It’s going to put more work on you.” He stroked the soft skin of her arm and held her hand up to his lips.

“I don’t mind, Ed. We’re all right financially right now – we can afford for you to do this. We’ll deal with anything else if it happens. It will be worth it if it helps you to graduate from college. Ed, I’ve been thinking about something myself. Since Diana’s baptism, I’ve been thinking about joining the Catholic Church. I think it will be better if we are all in the Church, together. I called Father Healy

today and he said I can start taking instructions. He is meeting with several people on Sunday nights for classes.”

“That’s okay, Margaret. I’ll make sure I’m home so I can keep Diana while you go to the classes. I’m sure Mom is ecstatic.”

“Yes, she said she had been doing a novena for me to join the church every month since we told them I was expecting. I’m really not sure why I never decided to do it before. Your family has been so good to me ever since I’ve lived in Sleepyside and I’ve certainly been to Mass often enough to know what’s going on. But, I’ve never wanted to change until recently.” She kissed him again. “This is the life I’ve always dreamed of having, and it’s all because of you.”

June 21, 1959

“Ed, Margaret, we asked you to dinner today because we have some news for you.” Ed’s dad, Lawrence, cleared his throat as he glanced around the table at his assembled family. Little Diana sat next to her grandmother, and Ed could see that his mother was upset about something.

“What is it, Dad?” Ed was puzzled. The senior Lynches had a family dinner most Sunday afternoons, and any of the family who could come was always welcome. Even the youngest, Barbara, was out of high school now, so a full gathering was not always possible. However, today all of the Lynches were present, even Charlotte and Caroline, in town for a few days between their stewardess assignments.

“You know I’ve been having more trouble with my leg lately, and Dr. Ferris says I need to either retire or work at a less strenuous job – something that doesn’t involve so much standing and walking. I’ve been looking around here, and I can’t seem to find anything suitable. You know a lot of our family are still in Virginia – that’s where we’re from, Margaret – and my cousin Tom has written me about how much cheaper it is to live down there. He says there are also some jobs I could probably do in the tourism industry, and he’s willing to

put in a word for me. Your mom and I have discussed it, and we're going to move – probably in a couple of months.”

“We hate to leave our granddaughter, but your dad and I feel like it will be the best thing for us.” Katherine Lynch spoke up. She dabbed at her eyes with a tissue.

“That's OK, Mom. We understand.” Ed tried not to think about how he and Margaret would be giving up the only people they trusted to watch their precious daughter. *Mom and Dad need to do this – I mustn't say anything to change their minds.*

“I'm doing an assignment in Richmond, starting next month.” Kay joined in the discussion. “Where in Virginia will you be going?” Kay was a registered nurse and worked for a travel nursing agency. The outgoing young woman enjoyed being able to visit many different parts of the country for assignments which generally lasted three months at a time.

“Kingsmill – it's near Williamsburg – you know, the colonial town that has been restored.”

Ed looked at his wife. Margaret was trying to smile for her in-laws' sake, but he knew how much she loved his parents and would miss them – especially his mom. He squeezed her hand under the table.

Charlotte and Caroline acknowledged the news, and voiced satisfaction that their parents' new home would be closer to the beach. However, the pair had their own apartment in Chicago, where their airline was based. The move would have little effect on them. Terry Lynch was home on leave from the Army, and likewise would be unaffected. He was supposed to ship out to Germany at the end of his leave, so he asked to have the opportunity to pack up some things from his room, to be moved or stored according to his parents' wishes.

“Mom, Dad, do you think I should try to transfer to a college in Virginia?” asked Barbara. Although eager to be out on her own, she didn't want to support herself until she had finished college.

Soon the table was buzzing as all of the older Lynches tried to advise the baby of the family. Margaret and her mother-in-law shared looks of commiseration over Diana's head.

May 13, 1961

"Oooh, Mummy! The cake is so pretty!" Diana Lynch clapped her hands as she stared in awe at the doll cake her mother had just finished decorating.

"I'm glad you like it, darling. The little girl who is getting the cake is just your age. I thought the doll was a little old for a five-year-old, but Mrs. Morgan wanted it for Janie's birthday cake." Margaret wiped her hands on a clean tea towel as she surveyed the cake with a critical eye.

One of the new fashion dolls, called Barbie, was covered from the waist down with aluminum foil. A tube cake and a bowl-shaped cake with the center cut out formed a long, bouffant skirt for her, after she was placed down into the center. Icing in shades of pink and white finished off the skirt with a flounced, tiered, Southern Belle look. Margaret had painstakingly created a bodice of icing and bonnet of crepe paper in matching shades, and had even made a miniature parasol for the doll to hold.

"Do you think you could make one for me, Mummy? Only I want mine to be purple. That's my favorite color, you know."

"Of course, sweetie. I hope I'll be making a lot of these. I'm doing it to make extra money so your dad can keep taking his classes for college."

"I know, Mummy. Just like you iron for people. Will you show me how to iron? I want to help Daddy, too."

"Maybe I'll show you how to iron Daddy's handkerchiefs when you are six. I'm afraid you'll hurt yourself. Ironing is for older people because the iron is heavy and it gets very hot."

February 24, 1964

“Mrs. Lynch, it looks as if you are carrying twins this time. You know I’ve been concerned for awhile that your womb seems larger than normal for this stage of your pregnancy. But today, I’m picking up two heartbeats.”

Margaret felt suddenly as if she was going to faint. Two babies! After all this time! Diana was already seven years old. They had almost given up hope for more children.

“Just be sure to get plenty of rest. Lie down each day for a couple of hours. No heavy work or lifting. Twins often come early, and I want you to carry these babies for thirty-eight weeks in order for them to get big enough and strong enough to be born.”

“Will I be able to keep decorating my cakes and taking in ironing?”

“I think that will involve too much standing for prolonged periods. You don’t want to take any chances with this pregnancy.”

May 14, 1964

“Tommy, did you know I have two sons now? Have a cigar.” Ed spoke to Tommy Delanoy, who pumped gas at Stanford’s service station when he wasn’t selling tickets at the Cameo movie theater.

“Thanks, Mr. Lynch, but I don’t smoke. I’ll give it to my dad, though. Congratulations!”

September 10, 1964

“Ed, why didn’t you sign up for a class this semester?” Margaret passed a bowl of coleslaw to her husband after serving a spoonful of baked beans to her daughter. Diana helped herself to a slice of canned ham, fragrant with her mother’s special mustard and brown

sugar glaze, and studded with cloves. Ed buttered a roll and cleared his throat before answering his wife's question.

"Margie-girl, I thought I had better take the opportunity of working some extra time this summer and fall. We could use the extra money with two more mouths to feed. I talked to my advisor about it. He wasn't too happy, but said that as long as I enroll again in the spring, it shouldn't count against me. He reminded me that I only have four years left to complete my degree."

"The boys aren't costing us much, yet." Margaret glanced at little Larry and Terry, asleep now in their bouncy seats on the floor. Today she had planned carefully so that she could nurse them while her dinner was baking in the oven; often she found herself waiting to eat because last-minute supper preparations caused her to put off their feeding until dinner was on the table. Diana could entertain the babies for a long time, but when the elder Lynches sat down to eat, Larry and Terry seemed to suddenly realize that they were hungry, too. Margaret couldn't eat while they cried, so she would feed them and come back to a cold meal.

"I just don't want to borrow money for my education," Ed explained. "If I work more now, I can take two classes in the spring. That will make up for missing the fall semester. Besides, I can help you more if I'm not in class." He reached across the table to clasp his wife's hand. "It's a lot of work to take care of three children and cook, and keep the apartment clean."

"I don't see how you can help me more, when you're working a lot of extra time. Anyway, I think we're starting to get into a routine. Maybe I can start to take ironing again in January, to help out with the money. I don't want you to lose out – you can't get behind."

January 5, 1966

Margaret stared at Dr. Ferris, her eyes wide with surprise.

“Pregnant? Again? Here I always had trouble getting pregnant – I can’t believe it! I hope it’s another girl this time. It will be nice for Diana to have a sister.”

April 20, 1966

“Twins -- again? Doctor Ferris, you can’t mean it! My boys will only be ... twenty-six months old when the new babies come. This idea will take some getting used to.”

“Just get plenty of rest. Thirty-eight weeks, remember. Don’t do any heavy lifting – you shouldn’t even be picking up your sons. And lie down for at least four hours a day.”

July 12, 1966

“Margie-girl, we have two darling baby girls! Dr. Tremaine said that everything went just fine with the surgery. You’ll be able to see your daughters in the morning.” Ed leaned over and kissed his wife. *I was so scared when Dr. Ferris told me that she needed a Caesarean section.* His sons had both been born normally. But one of these babies was in the breech position, and Dr. Ferris explained that it was safer for the baby to be delivered surgically. A surgeon, Dr. Tremaine, performed the procedure.

Margaret looked at him through bleary eyes. “Girls? That’s wonderful, Eddie. Just what I wanted.” She closed her eyes and grimaced with pain. The slightest movement was excruciating.

“The doctor said you’d be in the hospital for about ten days. Everything is going to be fine, sweetheart.” As a tear seeped from Margaret’s closed eye, Ed patted her hand awkwardly. “Nurse – nurse!” he called.

“You’ll have to leave now, Mr. Lynch. I’ll check your wife and give her some pain medicine. She’ll be very sore for several days.”

September 15, 1966

“Margie, get into bed and try to sleep. I’m here now and I’ll take care of the kids for awhile and fix some supper. I’m a good cook, you know!” Kay Lynch smiled at her old friend and hugged her as she urged her back to the bedroom.” Margaret had just finished nursing the baby girl twins and was tearing up ... again.

“Kay, there’s just so much to do. I’ve got a huge pile of laundry – not even counting the diapers! Ed’s shirts need ironing, supper hasn’t even been started, the boys need a bath, the place is a wreck I just don’t know what to do next. Every time I finish something, there’s more piled up somewhere else! And Ed ... I’m not complaining, don’t get me wrong. He’s the best! But he’s working more than ever now that we have five kids to support. There’s no getting home on the dot of six like he used to before the boys came. It’s eight-thirty or nine o’clock before he comes in. Naturally, then he’s too tired to help with anything. If the babies are awake, they’re crying. Poor Diana does everything she can to help me. She changes the babies and rocks them to sleep every night. And she bathes the boys every night. That poor girl is half asleep before she sits down to do her homework. And she’s only ten years old!” Margaret began to sob, and reached for the box of tissues by her bed.

“Margaret, honey, I’ll talk to Ed. And I have taken some time off from my job. I’ll be staying with you for a couple of weeks so you can get some rest.”

Kay closed the curtains and turned on a small fan in the bedroom to block some of the noise of the children from their mother’s ears. Closing the bedroom door behind her, she put a pot of water on the stove to make spaghetti, and then quickly sorted a load of laundry. “Thank goodness Eddie and Margie have their own washer and dryer in this apartment!” she said aloud. Next, Kay opened a package of ground beef, and it was soon sizzling in a skillet. She filled the kitchen sink with hot, sudsy water and stacked it with the dishes from the day’s meals. While Diana played with Larry and Terry in their room, she straightened up the living room in between trips to the kitchen to finish preparing the meat sauce, slicing a loaf of Italian bread, and cooking the spaghetti.

Soon the apartment had returned to a semblance of its usual order. Kay called the children and with Diana's help, the boys were fed without too much spaghetti sauce ending up on their clothing or the floor.

After supper, Diana offered to bathe her brothers, and Kay went to check on Margaret and the babies. She found her sister-in-law asleep; amazingly, the twin girls were still asleep too. Back to the kitchen to wash up the dishes, sweep the floor, and wash another load of clothes while drying the first. By the time those chores were done, Diana was back in the kitchen to let her aunt know the boys were in bed, but the girls were crying again.

Sighing, Kay went to the crib in Diana's room where the babies slept. The two infants squirmed and flailed their arms as they screamed. "Are you hungry?" she cooed to them. The babies didn't respond except to continue their protests, and she quickly changed their diapers and took them in to Margaret, who was now sitting up in bed.

"I heard them crying," she said with a sigh. "It's every two hours, day and night. I know that's normal for breastfed babies, but it's exhausting!"

With help from Kay and Diana, she propped the babies on pillows so that she could nurse both at the same time. Diana brought her mother a glass of water, which Margaret drank immediately. As soon as she could see that the feeding was proceeding normally, Kay went to pour a glass of milk for her nursing friend. She knew that the more liquid Margaret drank, the more milk she would produce.

When Ed finally arrived home at ten o'clock, his sister was ready for him. The rest of the household was asleep.

"Eddie, you have got to either get some help for Margie, or stop working so much and help her yourself. She is exhausted and I think she's suffering from postpartum depression. There is way too much work for one person to do in taking care of so many young babies, and she is not recovering strength after her C-section like she should be.

Diana helps as much as she can, poor kid! But she has school, and she needs to be a kid and not a little mother all the time.”

“Kay, I guess you’re right.” Ed sighed. “Margie hasn’t complained, and I guess I wanted to think she would tell me if everything wasn’t all right. I’m so close to finishing my degree! But Margie and the kids are the most important thing in my life. I’ll withdraw from the class I’m taking now, and I’ll still be able to get almost all of the tuition money back that I paid. That won’t really give me a lot more time at home, but at least I won’t have to study when I’m here. What else can I do?”

“Well, you can get a diaper service, for one thing. It’s ridiculous for Margie to wash diapers for four kids. It won’t cost any more than your college tuition would. And I think you should hire someone to come in a couple of times a week to do housework. Buy a baby carriage or stroller and take Margie out walking every evening. There’s plenty of nice weather left before it will be too cold. I think those things will do a lot to turn her around. She needs to go back to Dr. Ferris if she’s still crying every day.”

Ed rubbed his face. “We have a double stroller. But that thing is pretty heavy. I hadn’t even thought about that, but of course Margie couldn’t manage it alone yet. I’ve been a selfish oaf, Kay! Thank goodness you decided to come for a visit.”

“Never mind that now. The important thing is that Margaret gets the rest and help she needs to get her strength back and feel better. In a few months, I think her outlook will be a lot better – as long as she gets some help.”

December 25, 1966

“Ed, you’re the greatest husband anyone could have!” Margaret’s eyes were bright with tears of happiness as she surveyed the living room, strewn with pieces of bright Christmas wrapping paper just a few minutes before. Ed had taken a roll of pictures of the children opening gifts -- Diana and her brothers “helping” the two babies to open their packages. After gathering all of the scraps of paper and

discarding them, he was now preparing his special apple pancakes for Christmas breakfast.

Margaret left the children playing on the living room floor to give her husband a hug and kiss. “I don’t know how I would have made it through these past few months without your help,” she told him.

“Margie-girl, I wish I could have done more. You and the kids are the greatest things in my life. But I have to give the credit to Kay – she had to point it out to me that you needed me more than we needed the extra money I could make by working late, and more than I needed to finish my degree.”

Ed spooned batter into the skillet for five pancakes and arranged thin slices of apple on each circle. While the pancake batter sizzled in melted butter, he turned to Margaret and took her in his arms. He sang softly.

*Dreaming while I live
Living just to give
All my love to you
No one else will do
Sentimental me*

As Ed turned around to flip the pancakes, Margaret continued, “And I have a feeling that if you go to see your academic advisor as soon as he is back in his office, that you will be able to get an extension on your time frame. After all, your GPA is 3.96.” Her face glowed with pride. “Eddie, we’ll be all right. I think this is going to be one of those times when your mom’s saying will come true: things usually turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out. The day I met you was the luckiest day of my life. I couldn’t have asked for things to turn out any better than to have you for a husband.”

the end

Author's Notes

7120 words

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No profit is being made from this story. The characters of Diana Lynch, her parents and siblings, are the property of Random House and are used without permission, although with great respect.

First of all, I want to thank Cathy for creating Jix and making it such a great home.

My faithful and conscientious editors: Trish, Ryl, and Ronda – they have each given me suggestions that have improved my story, and called my attention to bits that are weak. The improvements are theirs; any mistakes are mine!

My lovely and talented webhostess and graphics guru, Vivian. Have I mentioned that she is also very brave? She has worked tirelessly to help me create and upload graphics for my stories – and put them in the right places. She also has spent a lot of time trying to teach me to format the story with html and removing all of the Microsoft Word junk. If the story looks good, it's all due to her help ☺

The pictures of the boy twins and the Christmas ornament are from istockphoto. Photos of Elizabeth Taylor (Margaret) and Ray Michel (Ed) are from the site: Classic Movie Kids and are used with the permission of the site owner. The baby in the white dress is from an ad for a christening gown. The twins in the stroller are from Sooner Rose's Xanga site, and are used with her permission.

Thanks to Anna, who gave me the inspiration for Mrs. Lynch's postpartum depression with her Diana story from Canon in Sleepyside.

Finally, I want to thank all the members of Jix and Zap's who have read my stories and encouraged me to write more.

Now for a few (!) notes on the story itself.

Re: Foster care: In Mysterious Visitor, we learned that Mrs. Lynch was raised in a foster home, and used her foster parents' name until she married. I wondered how and when foster care was formalized in the US. Child welfare services generally fall under the authority of the state social service network, rather than being a federal program. This site was a gold mine of information:

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~adoption/topics/index.html>

Although I was not able to read the works cited below, they show that foster care sanctioned and regulated by the state has been around for a very long time. I hypothesized that Mrs. Lynch was placed in foster care - rather than being placed for adoption - because of the existence of her adult brother, Montague Wilson, who would presumably have had custodial rights in regard to his minor sister. He could have

surrendered his rights so that she could have been adopted, but since he didn't know about her/ didn't know about his parents' deaths, he didn't realize there was a problem. Someone in the social service bureaucracy knew of his existence (the only barrier to her availability for adoption), but apparently the state was unable to trace him. Therefore Margaret remained in a kind of limbo – not free to be adopted, but without access to relatives who could have cared for her. That's my theory, and I'm sticking to it ☺.

* Tim Hacsí, "From Indenture to Family Foster Care: A Brief History of Child Placing," in *A History of Child Welfare*, ed. Eve P. Smith and Lisa A. Merkel-Holguín (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996), 155-173.

* Claudia Nelson, *Little Strangers: Portrayals of Adoption and Foster Care in America, 1850-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

* Mary S. Doran and Bertha C. Reynolds, *The Selection of Foster Homes for Children: Principles and Methods Followed by the Boston Children's Aid Society With Illustrative Cases* (New York: School of Social Work, 1919).

* U.S. Children's Bureau, *The Work of Child-Placing Agencies, Part I. A Special Study of Ten Agencies Caring for Dependent Children* by Catharine P. Hewins and L. Josephine Webster; *Part II. Health Supervision of Children Placed in Foster Homes* by Mary L. Evans, Bureau Publication No. 171 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1927).

* Loretta Renn, "The Single Woman as Foster Mother," in *Studies of Children*, ed. Gladys Meyer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 59-95.

* U.S. Children's Bureau, *Foster-Home Care for Dependent Children*, Bureau Publication No. 136 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1926).

I gave Ed Lynch a large family because I didn't want him to be another Sleepyside orphan, and thought it was realistic for the time. Although it is never stated in the books, I felt that the Lynch grandparents must live far away, since visits to see them involve long absences for Diana. I chose to have them move to Virginia because I thought that was a logical place, given the interest the Lynches have in visiting there and in purchasing Rosewood Hall. Diana (in Happy Valley) says "my parents met when they were ten years old, and even then my mother says she knew they would get married", but I decided that only Margaret was ten at their first meeting. Like a KK, I'm tainting the timeline to fit my story needs ;-). I did the same thing with Diana's birthday, which had to be in June because in my uni, I have already established Honey's birthday on July 11 (in Memories); I have planned for Jim's birthday to be on July 15, so that he is already 15 when he meets Trixie and Honey for the first time. I didn't want to have three BWG birthdays in the same week, and this way Diana remains a couple of weeks older than Honey.

"Sentimental Me", sung by Ed Ames, was a top-20 song in 1950. I've never heard it, but thought the words fit my characters.

I am indebted to this site for information on the history of community colleges:
http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutCommunityColleges/HistoricalInformation/PasttoPresent/Past_to_Present.htm

And this one:

http://www.sunywcc.edu/aboutwcc/about_the_college/about_the_college.htm

Westchester Community College was founded in 1946 as the New York State Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences in White Plains. In 1957, the County of Westchester bought the 360-acre John Hartford estate in Valhalla and designated 218 acres for the community college. Today, the college offers associate degrees in 40 subject areas. There is now a branch in Ossining, the “real” Sleepyside. The website states, “Westchester Community College knows that you are busy, so classes are offered during the day, evenings and weekends.” WCC is associated with SUNY, and discusses how credits can be transferred to a four-year college for a B.S. degree. Their website didn't give a specific time frame for earning a degree (of course that would be an A.S.), but it did make quite a point of stressing how they were flexible and worked with your schedule. I decided Ed would have changed his major to business when he went back. Due to family stuff and money issues, he had to take a break from school during a couple of semesters. I had him petition for an extension on his completion timeframe.

I did stop and take breaks with my own degree quest, taking one year of a BSN program at a four-year college away from home, then getting married and sitting out a semester because I applied too late for the nursing program at the community college nearer my home; earning my associate degree (within the normal 2 years, but I knew people who took longer due to grades or illness). Then I went to work for 5 years before deciding to complete my BSN. That took me 6 years of attending one class per term and taking a year's break after each of my 2 younger daughters was born. I kept plugging away because it was a personal goal of mine. So to me, the time frame never seemed unrealistic.

The saying that Margaret attributes to Ed's mom at the end: “Things usually turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out” is one that my grandmother liked to quote.

Thanks for reading!