

DETOURS
TO THE
GOOD
STUFF

Vickie McGillis

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated
to all the lonely souls out there...
Those who have been heartbroken,
neglected or abandoned...
The depressed, abused and suicidal.
Do not lose faith; for when all hope is lost in the
darkest hours of our lives,
It is then we discover our greatest strength...
The very sustenance that defines our moral character
and reshapes our destiny.
Assure yourself from time to time
that life will be better one day...
Because your dreams are still within your grasp.
And always bear in mind...
There are times when we have to go
through the bad things in life...
To get to the good stuff.

Vickie McGillis

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Prologue

Katie Munson was a struggling, poor young mother with four small children. At just 22 years of age, and freshly divorced, Katie had relocated her young family to their new home in a small rural town in southeastern Minnesota.

In the comfort of her new surroundings, Katie presumed that she, along with her son and three baby girls, were safe from harm's way. She believed they had escaped the iniquity from her past and were free to begin a renewed and happy life together.

December 2, 1967, was a very special day for Katie Munson. She was excited to be celebrating her son's birthday. Keith, her oldest, was turning four today, but while Katie prepared for the toddler's birthday party, nothing could have prepared her for the unforeseeable winter storm that was blowing in her direction, or the unspeakable terror that accompanied it!

This particular day would prove to be just the beginning of a perpetual, formidable journey for Katie and her young family in their pursuit of peace and happiness. The road ahead was littered with obstacles that oftentimes appeared impossible to avert. Despite the many unavoidable detours that changed the course

of their lives, Katie never lost sight of the potential rewards at the end of their relentless expedition.

This is the extraordinary and gripping tale of Katie Munson and her four children--Keith, Judith Ivy, Darcy and Samantha—as they navigate the river of life, both together as a family and independently from one another, in hopes of discovering the ultimate treasure... in search of “the good stuff.”



This book is based on a true story and inspired by actual events. All character names have been changed to protect privacy.



Part I

Storm on the Home Front



Chapter 1

Big Girls Don't Cry

KATIE MUNSON'S STORY begins at the very end of 1962. It was a starry, wintry Saturday evening in Huntington, Minnesota. Katie and the majority of her teenage peers in this small farming community were busy getting ready to attend the annual New Year's Eve bash at the Johnson residence, located just outside of Huntington.

The Johnson boys, Matt (18) and Mark (17), routinely had full reign over the activities of the household, since their father was killed in a farming accident four years earlier and their mother was out most evenings, now that she had begun dating again.

Katie left her house right after supper and walked to the party, since the Johnsons lived just a little over a mile down the road. She arrived at 7:30 p.m. Once inside the door, Katie removed her gray wool coat, hand-knitted mittens and galoshes. She placed her boots on the floor, in line with the others, and hung her coat on one of the available wall-mounted hooks in the entryway.

She straightened her dark-blue ruffled skirt and pink sweater with matching navy-blue flowers, and then proceeded toward the lively party in the spacious

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living room. Katie's big blue eyes scanned the room, searching for the familiar faces of her girlfriends among the crowd of adolescents bopping to the phonograph, which was belting out The Four Seasons' new smash hit, "Big Girls Don't Cry."

While the pretty 17-year-old blonde sought out her school chums, Katie happened to notice a striking young man in a black leather jacket, leaning against the wall across the room. He was standing all alone, smoking a cigarette, while watching the young girls dance. Katie fixed her gaze upon the alluring young lad, in the hopes that he would sense her eyes on him, glance in her direction, and then their eyes would make contact.

Unfortunately, the attractive black-haired boy didn't respond to her come-hither stare. In fact, he didn't seem to notice her at all. Katie shrugged off the disappointment and meandered through the party crowd, in search of her girlfriends. She had no intention of letting the young man's aloofness dampen her New Year's Eve.

Once she caught up with her girlfriends (Karen, Debbie and Jenny), Katie felt much more at ease, and before long, she was mingling, laughing, and joining the other gals on the dance floor. After cutting the rug to another Four Seasons' hit, "Sherry," the winded and thirsty Katie decided to take a dance break.

She headed for the half-empty punch bowl in the kitchen and poured herself a cup of red fruit punch.

That's when a tall, brown-haired young man wearing dark blue jeans and a white T-shirt approached her and introduced himself. "Hi, there!" he politely greeted. "I'm Darren Munson. What's your name?"

"Katie," the petite lass replied, still struggling to catch her breath after that last dance. "Nice to meet you, Katie," Darren affirmed. "So, do you live around here?"

"Sure do," Katie answered. "I live right here in town, just a mile down the road," she noted, pointing her finger in the general direction of her house.

"I can't believe we haven't met before," Darren reacted. Then he flirtatiously added, "I'm sure I would remember a good-looking doll like you!"

After exchanging the typical pleasantries of a first meeting, and the inevitable small-talk, Darren and Katie became immersed in private conversation.

Katie's girlfriends were perceptive to the obvious flirtation taking place around the punch bowl, so after filling their paper cups with the refreshing fruit punch and ginger ale concoction, which someone had spiked with vodka, the girls instinctively made themselves scarce, granting the engaging couple ample time to get better acquainted.

While she found Darren's conversation interesting, and his overt flattery most welcome, Katie couldn't help but sneak an intermittent glance at the boy in the black leather jacket who had initially tickled her fancy. She didn't find Darren nearly as attractive as the

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other young man, but Darren seemed quite friendly and rather enjoyable, so she decided to stay and chat with him for a while longer.

As they continued their mesmerizing conversation, Katie's best friend, Karen, decided that it was time to slow things down on the dance floor. She and her giggling gal-pals in the living room were curious to see what might transpire between Katie and this new boy who had snatched up all of their pretty little friend's attention.

Karen searched through the large pile of 45s on the coffee table. She selected one of Katie's favorite records and placed it on the phonograph. Karen had baited her trap. As "Johnny Angel" by Shelley Fabares began to waft through the house, Karen observed from afar, eager to find out whether the couple would get caught up in it.

"Oh, I just love this song," Katie hinted, as the lovely ballad commenced. She knew all the words by heart. Darren took the bait and seized the moment. "Would you like to dance, Katie?" he beseeched, extending his hand.

"Sure, I'd love to," Katie accepted. She took Darren's hand, and then he escorted the little lass through the crowd, into the living room, where they established their spot on the dimly-lit dance floor among the other swaying teenaged couples.

Katie had never slow-danced with a boy before and wasn't sure about the correct stance and proper

distance, so she decided to leave those decisions to her partner. Darren took Katie's left hand and placed it on his right shoulder. Then he clasped her right hand in his left, and before Katie realized it, they were dancing, swaying back and forth in perfect harmony.

"This isn't so difficult," Katie thought, suddenly realizing that she was having a wonderful time. Katie became so engrossed in the moment that she found herself humming quietly and then singing along with the lyrics.

As Darren turned her around, Katie glanced at her friends gathered around the record player. That's when she caught a glimpse of Karen, who was peering at them with a mischievous grin on her face. It suddenly dawned on Katie that she and Darren had been manipulated, but by that point, Katie didn't seem to mind.

When the record stopped playing, Katie was surprised that Darren didn't let go of her hand. He had just spotted a familiar face over by the kitchen doorway. "Katie, come with me," he urged. "There's someone I'd like you to meet." Darren gently ushered Katie across the living room and back to the kitchen.

"This is my kid brother, Rick," Darren introduced, tousling his brother's perfectly-groomed, sleek black hair, "and this is Katie."

To her astonishment, Darren had just presented her to the handsome boy in the black leather jacket, whom she had been admiring when she first arrived at

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the party. Katie gulped with embarrassment, thinking, “Gosh, I hope he didn’t see me gawking at him like some quirky little third-grader.”

Katie cleared her throat and mustered a polite, “N-nice to meet you, Rick.” Although she felt conspicuously nervous, that awkward feeling soon dissipated. Rick’s attention was obviously focused on something other than Katie, as he blurted, “Nice to meet you too. Well, I’m gonna go get another drink. See you guys later.”

“Well, that’s the end of that,” Katie mumbled to herself. “Not even a glimmer of interest on his part,” she sighed. Katie decided not to let it bother her and enjoy the remainder of the evening with her girlfriends and Darren. She also promised herself to never utter a single word about her short-lived infatuation with Darren’s brother.

Later that night, Matt Johnson interrupted the party with an announcement: “Hey guys, guess what...it’s almost midnight.” Katie’s friend Karen was closest to the phonograph, so she abruptly stopped the record, about halfway through Neil Sedaka’s “Breaking Up Is Hard to Do,” which made an eerie screech across the vinyl.

Everybody stopped what they were doing. All eyes focused on the enormous oak grandfather clock located at the base of the stairs leading to the upstairs level of the Johnson home.

The living room gradually grew quiet and motionless, until the only audible noise was the symmetrical

tick-tock of the second hand as it closed in on the coming new year, just moments away from 1963. The party-goers started the count-down: "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one...happy new year!"

"Happy new year, Katie!" Darren hailed. He looked longingly into Katie's baby-blue eyes, and then he leaned over and planted a customary New Year's Eve kiss upon her crimson lips.

"Happy new year, Darren," she reciprocated. Katie tried to veil her blushing cheeks by bowing her head. Although Katie had dated more than her share of boys in the past, the attractive 17-year-old had never been kissed by a boy upon a first meeting like that. Katie couldn't deny, however, that she delighted in it.

Katie and Darren quickly parted and meandered separately through the merry crowd, exchanging hugs and kisses with their peers, wishing them good luck and happiness in the new year, 1963. As Katie and her best friend, Karen, were embracing, the party music resumed with a popular favorite, "The Loco-Motion."

"C'mon, Katie, I love this song...let's dance!" Karen insisted. She yanked Katie by the arm and dragged her onto the dance floor. Several gals joined them for the next sequence of dances, while Darren and the guys admired the girls from the kitchen.

Katie suddenly felt dehydrated and left her girlfriends in the middle of a song, as she needed to get a refreshing beverage. As she shuffled toward Darren

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and the other boys, she glanced at the grandfather clock and noticed that it was nearly 12:30 a.m. Katie was having so much fun, she had completely lost track of the time.

"Oh, no! Look at the time!" Katie screeched, within earshot of Darren. "My curfew is one o'clock, so I'd better be heading home." Katie decided to skip the drink and get going, as she didn't want to get grounded for staying out past curfew.

"You don't really have to leave now, do you, Katie?" Darren asked, with a glimmer of disappointment in his big brown eyes. "You still have a half-hour left."

"Yeah, I know...but I have a mile hike ahead of me," Katie explained, as she darted off to the back entryway. Darren followed closely behind and helped Katie locate her gray wool coat from the piles of outerwear hanging on the hooks.

He gallantly draped Katie's jacket over her shoulders while she pulled her galoshes over her saddle shoes. Katie then slipped her dingy-white mittens (which her mother had knitted for her at Christmastime two years before) over her soft, fair hands with pink polished nails, and as her thick mitten reached for the doorknob, Darren pleaded, "Do you really have to leave so early?"

"Yes, I do!" Katie exclaimed. "I just got done being grounded, so I certainly don't want to get grounded again. Besides," she explained, "I have to get up early for church in the morning." At that point, Darren

grabbed her by the arm and begged, "Come on, Katie, stay a little while longer...and then I'll give you a ride home."

"No, thank you," Katie declined, pulling her arm away. She didn't like being man-handled, particularly since she had just met this guy and didn't know anything about this stranger named Darren. "You stay and have a good time, Darren," Katie urged. "I really wanted to walk home anyway, since it's such a beautiful night."

Darren ultimately surrendered. "Fine, Katie. I'll let you go and walk home," he agreed, "but only on one condition."

"Oh, yeah? What's that?" Katie asked with curiosity. Darren then declared, "You have to agree to go on a date with me. So, can I call on you, Katie?"

Darren waited impatiently for an answer. "Sure, why not?" Katie responded, rushing off through the rear storm door. "My phone number's in the book," she shouted, as she vanished through the hedge of arborvitae trees surrounding the Johnson property.

At the sound of the screen door slamming behind her, Katie heard Darren calling after her. "Katie, wait! I don't know your last name!" Darren eagerly anticipated her reply. "It's Wiederman," Katie hollered back, with a playful giggle, and then she skipped off into the light of the full moon, which reflected off of the new year's fluffy, virgin snow and illuminated her pathway home.

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As she blazed a trail through the freshly-fallen white powder, in the peaceful serenity of the quiet night, Katie amused herself along the journey home by singing the melody to the “Johnny Angel” tune, which had brought to mind her most memorable moment of the evening.

Darren called Katie the following morning, just after Sunday church services, and invited her to go for a ride in his car that afternoon. Katie graciously accepted. It was a beautiful, sunshiny New Year’s Day. The temperature had remarkably risen into the 40s, turning last night’s winter wonderland into a rapidly-dissolving, slushy mess.

“Bye, Mom...bye, Dad!” Katie hollered, after finishing her Sunday brunch, consisting of scrambled eggs, bacon, milk, and two pieces of toast topped with her mother’s homemade, mouth-watering raspberry preserves. Katie was so excited that she decided to wait for her date on the stoop by the front porch.

Inside the deep left pocket of her gray wool coat, she had tucked away the romance novel she was currently reading. Katie was nearing the end and felt reluctant to put it down. She hoped to finish the story by the time Darren arrived to pick her up.

Being an avid reader of romantic literature and poetry, Katie kept a collection of books lined neatly atop the chest of drawers in her bedroom (beneath her coveted Fabian, Ricky Nelson and Elvis Presley posters, which were arranged, in no particular order,

on the wall). Katie and her girlfriends always shared their books, which allowed them to enjoy a broader selection of reading materials.

Just minutes after Katie had finished the last page of another awe-inspiring romantic fable, Darren pulled up in a shiny, 1957 cherry-red Ford Fairlane coupe. Katie was blown away and breathless. She thought the car was very cool, indeed. Katie couldn't wait for her friends to see her riding around town in that awesome hot rod!

Her date was equally pleased to see that Katie was all ready to go. Darren stepped out of the car and opened the passenger-side door for her. "Hi there, Katie," he greeted, with a bright smile. "You look very nice...hop on in." Darren had taken extra care to pull up close to the curb so that Katie wouldn't have to step in the watery slush.

"Nice car!" Katie hailed, as she climbed inside. "And I love the color."

"Thanks!" Darren returned, as he got behind the wheel. "So, where would you like to go?" he inquired, offering, "We can go anywhere or do anything you want."

"Could we drive downtown and maybe grab a chocolate malt or something?" Katie suggested, in hopes that her girlfriends would be hanging out there as well. "Sure thing!" Darren replied, and then he revved up the engine, to her parents' chagrin.

Once the couple had arrived at the Deuce Scoop

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(the most popular teenage hangout in Huntington), Darren exited the vehicle and walked around to the other side, granting Katie a moment to check her look in the side-view mirror. In true gentleman form, Darren opened Katie's door, took her by the hand, and escorted her out of the car.

Katie soon spotted her girlfriends (Karen, Debbie and Jenny) across the street, heading into the arcade. "Hi, girls!" Katie hollered, with a friendly wave. Her buddies instinctively waved back and shouted, "Hi, Katie!" They stood in front of the arcade and observed with curiosity as Katie walked into the Deuce Scoop with her new "beau."

Darren placed his hand on the small of her back and escorted Katie into the busy malt shop. As the couple entered the doorway, Katie glanced over her shoulder and noticed that her best friend was gesturing two thumbs up, which caused Katie to blush. Katie smiled back at Karen and acknowledged her signal with a wink of her eye.

She had never felt like this before. Katie suddenly felt so popular and well-received. She had been allowed to start dating after her "sweet-sixteen" birthday party, about a year and a half ago. Since then, several neighborhood boys, as well as some boys from her high school, had come to call on Katie, but none of them had his own set of wheels, which prompted Katie to wonder about Darren's age. She presumed him to be around 18, perhaps even 19 years old.

Darren selected a quiet table in the corner of the Deuce Scoop, where they could be isolated from the rest of the hopping crowd. He and Katie each ordered a chocolate malt, which they enjoyed while listening to the jukebox music that played continuously, courtesy of the other patrons in the ice cream parlor. The couple chatted for hours on end, and even ordered a second round of chocolate malts.

During their engaging conversation, Katie noticed one of her favorite records, "Can't Help Falling in Love" by Elvis Presley, playing on the jukebox. Like most teenage girls around the globe, Katie was a devoted, adoring fan of "The King of Rock and Roll." Even though Darren was speaking at the time, Katie feigned attention, which, for the duration of the song, remained captivated by Elvis's suave and sultry voice.

Katie Wiederman had always considered herself to be a "hopeful" romantic. She often daydreamed about falling madly in love with some charming, handsome stranger who resembled any of the enchanting gentleman characters she so often read about.

"Hey, Katie, is everything all right?" Darren asked, puzzled. "You look sort of distant or something. Am I boring you?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, Darren. No, I'm fine, really," Katie assured her date. "I guess my mind just wandered off for a moment. I tend to do that sometimes," she admitted.

"Anything you'd care to share with me?" Darren

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nudged. "Oh, no, not now anyway...maybe another time," Katie replied, feeling her cheeks start to flush, in spite of the two frozen chocolate malt beverages she had just ingested. "So, tell me more about yourself, Darren," Katie asked her date, in an effort to change the subject.

"Well, I have nine brothers and sisters," Darren disclosed. "You already met my brother Rick at the party last night."

"Oh, my heavens!" Katie shrieked. "I thought our house was crowded, with five kids in the family, but I can't imagine a house full of ten kids!" she ranted. "So, where do you fit in, Darren...at the top somewhere, or closer to the bottom?"

"Actually I'm the oldest," Darren returned, "so we have lots of little kids at home. The older ones help raise the younger ones, so then it's not so hard on my mama."

"And here I'm the baby in my family," Katie divulged. "I have three older brothers, and my only sister, Roberta, is eleven years older than me, so she's already married and has a family of her own. She left home when I was only six or seven," Katie somberly recalled, as she swirled her straw through the melted ice cream at the bottom of her malt glass. "Roberta was like a second mother to me...and very protective of me."

"You must really miss your sister," Darren commented, as he reached across the table for Katie's

silky-smooth hand. "Yeah, I do," Katie sighed. "But, my brothers were good to me. They'd take me for rides in our dad's car whenever they went to pick up their girlfriends, or we'd just go cruising out in the country, and they'd give me and my friends rides in the scooter box," she fondly reminisced. "They're all gone now too...either married or in the military service...so I'm the only one left at home."

"That must get really lonely sometimes," Darren surmised, caressing her hand. "Yeah, sometimes," Katie agreed, "but my family has a lot of get-togethers and picnics, and I have lots of friends too. We go to all the high-school games and dances, and we have sleep-overs and slumber parties...and I'm in the chorus too, so I keep busy. I also do a lot of baby-sitting," she added, smiling. "I just love taking care of babies!"

"Oh, yeah?" Darren returned. "Do you want to get married and have a family of your own some day?"

"Well, sure," Katie replied, "but what I really wanna do is join the Navy after I graduate in the spring," she clarified. "I'd love to travel around the world by ship and dock at some of the world's most beautiful ports and see the places I've read about."

"That sounds fascinating," Darren remarked. "I'm actually turning 21 tomorrow, and I'm still trying to figure out what I wanna be when I grow up," he added, with a chuckle. "I wish I had your confidence."

At first, Katie was somewhat shocked to learn that Darren Munson was not a young lad of her age, but

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rather an adult man of 21, working odd jobs for various farmers in neighboring communities, with no real occupational ambitions or immediate plans for the future. "Well, then...happy birthday, Darren," was all Katie could muster.

"So, when's your birthday, Katie?" her date inquired. "In the spring," Katie replied. "I'll be eighteen in May, and then I can't wait to graduate in June," she commented. Their nearly four-year age difference didn't seem to matter much to Katie, as she felt adulated by this older gent's infatuation with her, but she feared her parents would never allow their 17-year-old daughter to date a 21-year-old man.

"Well, it's getting late," Katie hinted, after noticing that it was nearing 5 p.m. "My sister and brothers, and their husbands, wives and kids, are probably all at the house by now, so I'd better get on home too," she conveyed. "On New Year's Day, my mother always makes a huge pot of oyster stew for supper, with a cheese and sausage tray, and then we all sit around telling jokes and playing card games all night long."

"That sounds like fun," Darren replied. "Our family doesn't really do anything special on New Year's Day," he revealed. "Besides, my mama likes to rest on Sundays...her only day off all week long."

"I don't blame her," Katie understood. "She probably never gets a free moment just to put her feet up, let alone any time to herself...the poor woman!"

After paying the check at the Deuce Scoop, Darren

took Katie home and dropped her off in front of her house. It was already pitch dark outside, so he put his red Fairlane in park mode, and then he leaned over and kissed his date goodbye.

"Goodnight, Katie," Darren muttered, with a crackling voice. "I had a really good time this afternoon."

"So did I," Katie reciprocated. "Thanks for the malts...and for the ride home."

"Can I call you tomorrow?" Darren beseeched. "Yeah, I'd like that," Katie returned, adding, "Goodnight, Darren."

After that enjoyable first date, Darren Munson and Katie Wiederman started seeing each other on a regular basis. Although Katie had promised to continue spending her Friday nights with her girlfriends, she reserved Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons exclusively for going out on dates with Darren, her new "boyfriend."

When Darren arrived the following Saturday evening, to take Katie out on their second date, her parents insisted on meeting their daughter's new beau. Katie felt compelled to lie to them about Darren's true age, so she told them he was 18. She felt extremely guilty about lying to her parents, but Katie feared her parents would forbid her from seeing Darren if they knew the truth. Katie Wiederman had never defied her parents in all her 17-1/2 years, up until that first week of 1963.

Her girlfriends, on the other hand, all envied

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Katie, because she was dating an attractive older man with a really groovy car. Although she thoroughly enjoyed his company, Katie wasn't exactly sure how she felt about Darren. At that early stage in their relationship, she was just going along for the ride and enjoying herself.

Katie had never actually been in love, or even had a steady boyfriend, for that matter, but romance routinely occupied her thoughts. Most nights, before going to bed, Katie's ritual consisted of changing into her flannel pajamas, getting comfortable with just the right amount of pillows propped up behind her head, reading the latest romantic adventure, and then losing herself in the fantasy until she ultimately fell fast asleep.

As the weeks passed, however, Katie was finding it difficult to concentrate on the love affairs culminating between the written pages in her hands because she couldn't stop contemplating her own relationship with Darren Munson. Katie closed her book for a moment, to ponder the pressing question in her life: "Is this love?"

Katie was quite naive when it came to the affairs of the heart, and especially undereducated in the subject of sexual intercourse. In addition, she was equipped with neither the wisdom nor the experience to differentiate love from infatuation.

Although she did acknowledge that she had a genuine connection with Darren, Katie wondered

whether she truly loved him, or whether she was in love with the idea of being with an older man who showered her with attention and flattery. Despite her indecisiveness, Katie was curious to discover where this relationship might lead.

The first Saturday evening in March, Darren arrived at the Wiederman residence at 7 p.m. sharp, to pick Katie up for a very special date. He and Katie were celebrating their two-month anniversary of the night they first met, at the New Year's Eve bash.

Darren had their special evening all planned out in advance. First, he intended to take Katie to Lumberton (about 25 miles from Huntington) and treat her to a drive-in picture show to see *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which was playing at the Cineplex Drive-Inn Theater at 8 p.m. (Darren was a loyal fan of Mr. Gregory Peck and had seen most of his movies while growing up, including last year's *The Guns of Navarone*, which was Darren's current favorite.)

He also decided to surprise Katie, at some point in the evening, by asking her to "go steady" with him. During the film's intermission, Darren strolled over to the concession stand to get himself and Katie a cherry cola soda, along with some fresh buttered popcorn. He also utilized that brief recess to rehearse his approach when asking Katie to be his "one-and-only girl."

When he returned to his car, Darren carefully handed Katie the refreshments, to place upon the

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dashboard. He nervously walked back around to the driver's side of the coupe and climbed inside. Katie impulsively reached for the popcorn, but Darren intercepted her right hand. He held onto her hand and turned his body toward Katie, so that he could gaze directly into her beautiful, clear blue eyes.

"Katie," Darren began, clearing his throat, "there's... uh, something I've been meaning to ask you."

"What is it, Darren?" Katie asked with curiosity. She couldn't help but wonder why Darren was suddenly acting so melodramatic. Her boyfriend then reached into the inner pocket of his brown leather bomber jacket and removed a small shiny object. It was his 1959 class ring from Huntington High School.

While still gripping Katie's right hand, Darren began to slide the bulky gold ring onto her slender middle finger. "Would you wear my ring, Katie?" Darren beseeched. "I've been thinking about us, and I really like you a lot...and I want us to go steady."

Katie was obviously taken by surprise. She really hadn't given much thought to going steady, since they hadn't been dating for very long, but once again, Katie was overcome by flattery, and she really liked him too. Therefore, she smiled and hastily accepted Darren's proposal. "Yes, Darren...I will wear your ring."

Darren and Katie shared a lengthy embrace, and then Darren kissed her more passionately than he ever had done before. That was, unquestionably, the most romantic moment Katie had ever experienced in her

young life. She compared this new wave of emotions with those she had only read about in the love stories that came to life in her romance novels. Katie hoped that these amorous feelings would never end.

The intermission concluded, and the motion picture resumed. Once Darren and Katie had consumed the last fluffy kernel of popped corn, and had slurped the last drop from their cherry colas, Darren motioned for Katie to scoot over and sit beside him. He then put his arm around Katie's shoulders, where it remained until the end of the movie.

Katie felt so relaxed in Darren's arms, with her head cradled on his masculine shoulder. She reveled in the pungent scent of leather on his jacket, which somehow managed to overpower the flowery perfume she had sprayed rather abundantly on her torso, neck and wrists earlier that evening. Katie felt so warm, snug and comfortable that she wished the movie would last all night long.

When the picture show concluded, Darren started the engine and headed back toward Huntington, even though he was reluctant to take Katie home just yet. It was still fairly early, and he didn't want their wonderful evening to end. "What time do you have to be home tonight, Katie?" Darren asked, fully aware that Katie's curfew was 1 a.m.

"Well, not until one o'clock," Katie replied, hinting that she wasn't quite ready to end the evening either. "Do you want to stop somewhere along the way?"

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Darren asked. "Yeah, sure," Katie answered. "It's too early to go home yet."

Halfway home to Huntington, Darren made a left turn onto Pebble Lake Road. When they reached Pebble Lake Park, Darren located a secluded spot where they could park in the still of the night and be all alone together.

Under the moonlit night, as the stars danced up above, reflecting on the smooth surface of the serene Pebble Lake, Darren and Katie discussed the movie's dramatic plot, as well as the amazing actors, the delicious popcorn they shared at the Cineplex and, in general, what a terrific evening their two-month anniversary had turned out to be.

During an awkward moment of silence, however, Katie popped a piece of bubble gum into her mouth and reached over to turn on the radio, which was playing "He's So Fine" by the Chiffons. Katie then abruptly turned her head away from Darren and sneezed.

"Are you getting chilly, Katie?" Darren asked. "Maybe a little," Katie admitted.

"Yeah, me too," Darren concurred. "Let's see what we can do about that."

As Darren restarted the car's engine to get the heater running, Katie's stare became fixed upon his silhouette. In that moment, captivated by the ambience of the moonlight dancing on the lake, together with the song playing on the radio and the strong scent

of leather lingering in the air, Katie found Darren to be most attractive.

“Just give her a few minutes to warm up,” Darren asserted, “and we’ll be toasty in no time.” He then pulled his girlfriend in close, in an effort to keep Katie warm for the time being. Darren put his hand underneath her chin and lifted her face up toward his and whispered, “I really like you, Katie...and I hope you like me too,” before he kissed her.

After that, it wasn’t long before the couple started necking. As their kisses grew more passionate, Katie began to run her fingers through Darren’s wavy, chestnut-brown hair. At the same time, Darren untied the light-blue satin ribbon from Katie’s blonde ponytail, letting her long golden locks cascade over her slender shoulders.

“You’re so beautiful, Katie,” Darren uttered, as he gently kissed her neck. Never before had Katie felt so attractive and so desired. For the first time in her life, she was beginning to understand what it feels like to be a woman.

While their passion for each other heightened, Darren enticed Katie to climb into the back seat with him, where they would be more comfortable. Darren removed his bomber jacket and helped Katie off with her heavy wool coat. The windows of the ‘57 Ford Fairlane fogged up so significantly that the couple soon had complete privacy.

Darren pulled Katie close to him and resumed

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kissing her. He then removed his denim shirt and very slowly began to unbutton Katie's light-blue sweater. Katie was very nervous, indeed. She wasn't sure exactly what was transpiring, but she had a pretty good idea. She had read about these feelings of emotional overload but couldn't believe this was actually happening to her!

In heat of that explosive moment, the 17-year-old beauty ultimately surrendered to her 21-year-old boyfriend's manly charms and sexual advances. The only concept occupying her youthful mind at that time was, "Darren Munson loves me...and I think I love him too." Although she really hadn't given much thought to the consequences of her actions, Katie Wiederman's innocence was forever compromised.

After Darren dropped her off at home, just ten minutes before curfew, Katie rushed upstairs, brushed her teeth and went straight to bed. While changing into her pajamas, she noticed a large hickey on her neck, reflecting from her vanity mirror on the bureau. "Oh, my goodness!" Katie screeched, as she examined the round, dark, purplish blemish tattooed on her fair-skinned neck

Katie felt both proud and ashamed at the same time, knowing that her elders would be appalled, yet she felt giddy, as this was the first "love bite" she had ever received from a boy. Katie knew she had to conceal the evidence of her torrid encounter from her parents, teachers and schoolmates, and especially

from the reverend and parishioners at the Presbyterian church.

"I know," she contended, before crawling into bed. "I'll just wear a high-collared blouse with a skirt to church in the morning."

No matter how hard she tried, Katie couldn't fall asleep. She was far too excited to sleep or read or anything. "I can't believe I'm going steady!" she exclaimed, to no one in particular, while admiring the bulky gold band on her right middle finger. Katie lay awake for hours, replaying the evening's events over and over in her mind. Her night-light illuminated her bedroom just enough for her to continue adoring Darren's class ring, which she twirled around her finger incessantly.

As she relished in this new milestone of her adolescence, Katie presently considered herself to be a full-fledged woman. Any guilty thoughts she may have entertained earlier were quickly relinquished by one recurring assumption: "Darren must really love me, if he wanted to go all the way with me, right?" Those were the last words Katie uttered before drifting off to dream about her own romantic adventures.

A month and a half later, on an unseasonably warm Sunday night in late April of 1963, Katie fell asleep with her bedroom window open, unaware of the cold snap that had been forecast earlier on the 10 p.m. nightly news. The temperature continued to drop, and Katie was awakened in the middle of the

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night by a sudden chill. She immediately closed the window and crawled back into bed.

Katie wrapped herself snuggly underneath the covers, but she just couldn't get back to sleep. The chill that had settled deep within her bones seemed far too invasive to be a nip from the cool spring night air.

A while later, Katie's shivers were succeeded by nausea. Shortly thereafter, Katie felt the sudden onset of retching in her stomach, with bile beginning to creep up into her esophagus. Katie covered her mouth with her hand and sprinted downstairs to the bathroom as swiftly as she could. Immediately upon reaching the commode, Katie flung up the toilet seat lid and vomited profusely.

When the daylight hour of Monday morning emerged, Katie still felt nauseated and lightheaded, so she ate some soda crackers and washed them down with a few sips of warm ginger ale.

Despite her ailment, Katie was determined to get herself to school, as she had a major test in first-period history class. That was to be the last exam before finals, so it was imperative that she attend class. "Boy, this sure is a rotten time to come down with the flu," Katie mumbled under her breath, as she gathered her jacket and books, and then she trudged out the back door.

Katie completed her history exam before the period ended. Once again, she started feeling sick to her stomach, so she asked the teacher, Mr. Dominic, if she

could be excused to use the lavatory. Katie picked up her books and writing tablet, gathering them to her bosom as she left the classroom.

While en route to the girls' lavatory, Katie felt the bile begin to creep up from her abdomen, into the back of her throat. She hastened her pace and began to trot toward the restroom. "Oh, no!" she thought. "I'm not going to make it!" Katie had gotten just inside the bathroom door before she let her stack of books fall to the floor near the sink basin. She then covered her mouth and made a mad dash into one of the stalls.

She had made it just in the nick of time. Katie immediately fell to her knees and leaned her head over the toilet bowl. While holding her long blonde hair away from her face, she vomited again and again. Eventually, the vomiting did subside, but Katie knew she had missed roll call for second-period science class. Given the nausea Katie was experiencing, she decided she wouldn't be attending science class today.

Katie rinsed her mouth, splashed some cold water on her colorless face, ran a brush through her tousled hair, and then she secured her hair into a pony tail using a rubber band and pink ribbon she had brought with her that day for gym class.

While smoothing out the fresh wrinkles in her pink and black pleated skirt, Katie noticed that she had gotten some vomitus on her black and white saddle shoe, so she unrolled some toilet tissue and wiped the repulsive residue from her shoe.

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She took a deep breath, exhaled with a tremendous, cleansing sigh, and retrieved her belongings from the bathroom floor. Katie then started down the long hallway toward the nurse's office, as she needed to obtain a written permission slip from the school nurse in order to be excused from classes for the remainder of the day.

While Katie waited in the seating area just outside the nurse's office, her palms became clammy, and she could feel beads of sweat begin to form around her temples. Katie couldn't wait to get home and crawl back into bed. Just five minutes had passed, but it seemed more like 50 minutes to Katie.

Growing increasingly impatient, Katie started fidgeting in her chair, crossing one leg over the other, then switching legs, all the while chewing on her fingernails (an unattractive habit she had inherited from her mother). Katie eventually sat on both hands in an attempt to control her anxiety. Finally, she heard the office door latch depress.

The heavy door opened, to reveal Nurse Simpson—a stern, heavy-set woman with dishwater-blonde hair piled loosely in a bun on top of her head, secured with bobby pins, and tucked underneath her white nurse's hat, with wisps of hair accenting her smiling face. "Hello, Katie Wiederman," the nurse greeted. "What can I do for you today?"

"Well," Katie replied, "I've been sick to my stomach and throwing up a lot. I can't seem to keep

anything down," she clarified. "I think I've got the flu." The nurse then inquired, "Is anybody else at home ill, Katie?"

"No, just me," Katie answered. "It came on all of a sudden last night."

"Did you eat anything out of the ordinary?" Nurse Simpson questioned.

"No," Katie responded. "We had pork chops, mashed potatoes and green beans for supper," she expounded. "I felt fine when I went to bed, but then I woke up sometime during the night with chills...and after that I got sick to my stomach."

"Well, let's take a look at you," Nurse Simpson asserted. The nurse placed a thermometer under Katie's tongue and then shuffled through some papers on her desk while waiting for the mercury to rise.

After a minute or two, the nurse removed the thermometer from Katie's mouth and stated, "Well, you don't have much of a temperature, but your hands are clammy and your color could be a little bit better, so I'm going to write you a permission slip to excuse you from school for the rest of the day."

The nurse scribbled a note on a piece of paper and handed it to Katie. "Thank you, Nurse Simpson," Katie uttered. The nurse further instructed Katie to go straight home and get some rest. "Don't forget to drink plenty of clear liquids and eat something light," the nurse added. "Some chicken noodle soup and soda crackers should do the trick."

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Katie returned home from school at 10:15 a.m. Her mother, Sally, was instinctively curious as to why her daughter had gotten home from school so early. Katie was a typically healthy teenage girl, with a very good attendance record at school.

"Katie, honey, what are you doing home so early?" Sally inquired. "I'm sick," her daughter replied. "I think I have the flu...but don't worry, Mom...I went to the nurse's office and got an excuse for the rest of the day." Katie handed her mom the note.

"Let me feel your forehead," Sally beckoned. "You feel a little warm, but you do look awfully pale." Katie then explained her symptoms to her mother. "Well, I first got sick last night while I was in bed. I felt chilled and then I threw up...and then after I finished my history exam in first period today, I got sick and threw up again."

Sally instructed her daughter to go to bed and rest. "I'll bring you some nice hot chicken noodle soup and soda crackers later on for lunch, okay?" her mother offered.

"Okay...thanks, Mom," Katie replied. She obediently placed her books neatly on the dining room table and headed up the stairs to her bedroom.

Katie started feeling a little better after lunch and managed to keep some chicken soup and crackers down. After that, she slept the rest of the afternoon, right up until supper time. "Katie, your father's home!" her mother hollered up the stairs. "Time for you to come down and get ready for supper."

"Okay, Mom," her daughter shouted back, as she stumbled out of bed. "I'll be right down!"

It was 5:30 p.m. Katie's father, Charles (or "Buster" as he was better known by his family, friends and business associates), had just returned home after working a full day--hauling crushed rock, lime, sand and/or gravel in one of his many dump trucks for the trucking business he had started as a younger man.

The Wiederman family typically sat down to supper at 6 p.m., which was the time Buster had usually gotten himself cleaned up after work, while Katie set the kitchen table and Sally finished cooking their dinner on the stove or oven. Buster was already seated in his usual place at the table when Katie came downstairs.

"Hi, Dad," Katie greeted her father, as she joined him at the oval-shaped kitchen table. "Well, hello, Sweet Pea," Buster cordially returned.

"Dad...I'm almost 18 years old," Katie whined. "I'm much too old for you to be calling me 'Sweet Pea'."

"I don't care if you're 80 years old," her father rebuked. "You're always gonna be my little Sweet Pea... so," Buster continued, "your mother tells me you got sick at school today. Are you feeling any better now?"

"Oh, yes, much better," Katie replied. "I think Mom's homemade chicken noodle soup could cure just about anything!"

"That's wonderful news, Dear," Sally interjected,

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as she transferred the evening meal from the stovetop to the kitchen table. "So, who's hungry for some pot roast?"

After supper, Katie washed all the dishes, pots and pans, while Sally put the leftover food in the Frigidaire and wiped down the stove and kitchen table. Buster retired to his wooden rocking chair in the living room, as he did every night after supper, where he smoked his tobacco pipe and read the evening paper, followed by his favorite television programs, and ending with the 10 p.m. nightly news before retiring to bed.

Sally and Katie were certain to join Buster in the living room a little bit later for their family viewing of *The Andy Griffith Show*, as they did every Monday night. "Andy" was Buster's favorite television show, and they enjoyed sitting down to watch it together as a family.

Thus, in honor of their Monday night family tradition, Katie rarely made plans with friends or even her boyfriend on Monday evenings. Before the program aired, however, Katie gave Darren a jingle on the telephone, since she wouldn't be seeing him that evening. "Hi, Darren...it's Katie," she greeted.

"Hi, Katie! How are you?" Darren inquired. "Well, I'm feeling all right now," Katie disclosed, "but I wasn't feeling very well earlier today."

"Huh? What do you mean?" Darren asked, concerned. Katie proceeded to inform her boyfriend about the flu-like symptoms she had experienced the

night before and again that morning in school. "Gosh, I hope you feel okay tomorrow so I can see you," Darren remarked. "I miss you, Katie."

"I miss you too," Katie replied. "I'm sure I'll be fine by tomorrow night."

"Good!" Darren rejoiced, adding, "Well, I know you're getting ready to watch Andy Griffith with your folks, so call me tomorrow after school and let me know if you're up for anything...okay, Doll?"

"Yes, I will call you when I get home from school... goodnight, Darren," Katie whispered, before she made a kissing sound into the receiver. "Goodnight, Katie," her boyfriend reciprocated, returning a goodnight kiss to his steady gal.

The following morning, Sally made scrambled eggs and toast for breakfast. Buster was running behind schedule, so he consumed his breakfast in record time and quickly slurped down his coffee, while Sally handed Buster his red thermos jug and aluminum lunch pail, containing two bologna and cheese sandwiches, a crisp red apple, and three oatmeal-raisin cookies, which Sally had baked last Saturday afternoon.

"Have a good day at work, Buster," Sally blurted, before planting a quick peck on his stubbly cheek as she sent him on his way. "I love you!" she shouted. "I love you too, Sweetheart," Buster echoed, as he stormed out the back door, letting it slam behind him.

Katie was moving a little slowly that Tuesday

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morning as well. As she pulled a chair up to the kitchen table, her mother remarked, "Well, it's about time you got out of bed, sleepy-head. You're gonna be late for school if you don't get a move-on."

"I know, Mom," Katie replied, yawning and stretching. She poured herself a small glass of orange juice and guzzled it down. "I was really thirsty," Katie declared, with a loud sigh. "I think I'll just have another glass of juice and then I'll get going."

Sally placed a dish of scrambled eggs on the table in front of Katie and ordered, "You have to eat some breakfast before you run off to school, Katie. At least have some eggs before you go." Katie obeyed her mother and started eating the scrambled eggs.

She felt her stomach begin to retch about midway through her breakfast entrée. Katie abruptly left the kitchen table and bolted toward the bathroom. She closed the door tightly behind her before the vomiting ensued. When Katie came out of the bathroom, her mother was genuinely concerned about her daughter and beseeched, "Are you still sick, Honey?"

"I don't know what's going on, Mom!" Katie revealed, in a bit of a panic. "I thought I was getting better...but after I ate the eggs, I felt sick to my stomach again."

"Hmm," Sally wondered aloud. Katie's mother, who had been educated in anatomy and medicine through nurses training courses, found her daughter's symptoms to be far too lacking and fleeting to

be influenza. "So, you felt fine last night," Sally recounted, "but you were sick yesterday morning...and now, after eating breakfast, you're suddenly throwing up again this morning."

"Yeah," Katie confirmed. "I guess I must have the flu after all," she deduced. "I don't think I'll be able to go to school today either, Mom."

"Katie," her mother instructed, "uh...why don't you sit back down at the table with me for a minute so we can have a little talk." Katie took her seat and drank a few more sips of orange juice from her half-empty glass.

"Listen carefully, Honey," Sally beseeched, holding her daughter's hand. "Now, I know that you and Darren have been going steady for some time now," she alluded. "Is there anything you want to share with me about your feelings for him...or anything else you want to discuss about your relationship?"

Katie gulped and inquired, "Um, what exactly are you getting at, Mother?" That's when Sally asked her daughter quite frankly, "Is there a chance, any chance at all, Katie that...that you could be pregnant?"

Her daughter nearly choked on her orange juice, for Katie was astonished by her mother's directness, which was very uncharacteristic of Sally. Katie was utterly embarrassed, so she evaded her mother's unnerving query by maintaining silence.

"There's only one way to get pregnant, Dear," her mother interrogated. "So, tell me, Katie...have you ever had relations with Darren?" Katie knew that she

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couldn't provide the answer her mother longed to hear, so she hung her head in shame.

"Katie, I asked you a question and I expect an answer!" Sally demanded. Katie had already lied to her parents about her boyfriend's age, so there was no way her conscience would allow her to look into her mother's eyes and lie to her again.

"Yes, Mom...I suppose it could be possible," Katie finally admitted, "but we only did it that one time, I swear!"

"That's all it takes, Katie!" Her mother retorted. "Oh, my goodness!" Sally exclaimed. Katie's pretty blue eyes began to redden with sadness, and soon she was shedding tears of guilt, shame, remorse and disappointment.

Her daughter's somewhat limited confession, combined with the current physical symptoms Katie was exhibiting, had culminated to conceive Sally's worst nightmare. She took a deep, cleansing breath and asked her sobbing daughter, "When was the last time you had your menses?"

Katie had to pause and think hard for a moment. She blew her nose into a handkerchief and answered, "A couple months ago, I think." Katie had never kept track of her menstrual cycles, as she wasn't very knowledgeable about the female reproductive system. (In 1963, there were no sex-education or health classes offered in schools to educate young women about their bodies or birth control methods.)

"Well, there's only one thing to do now," Sally proclaimed. "What's that?" her frightened daughter asked. "We'll have to take you to the doctor for a complete female examination, to find out whether or not you're pregnant."

Katie was utterly mortified. This was something so very new to her, and she was disinclined to have that type of examination performed on her body. "Oh, God, no!" she shrieked. "Do I really have to do that, Mother?" Katie pleaded, her tears falling like rain.

"I'm afraid that's the only choice we have right now," Sally explained. "I'm sorry, Honey, but you've made your bed, and now you have to pay the consequences."

Sally continued to caress her daughter's hand, in an attempt to console the bewailing, frightened 17-year-old and calm her down. "I'll tell you what, Katie," her mother offered. "I'll make an appointment for you with Doctor Clawson for tomorrow while Buster's at work... and we won't mention a word of this to your father until we know for sure that you're with child."

The next morning, the Weidermans gathered at the kitchen table for breakfast, just like any other morning. Unfortunately, this rainy spring day was most certainly not going to be a typical day for Sally or her daughter. Katie absolutely dreaded the upcoming 10:30 a.m. doctor appointment; in particular, the horrifying female examination she was about to experience for the very first time.

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Once Buster had left for work, Katie tried to eat some toast with Sally's homemade strawberry jam, accompanied by a small glass of whole milk. Once again, right after finishing her breakfast, Katie recognized the familiar retching sensation she had been experiencing the last two days. She suddenly found herself running to the bathroom for another episode of vomiting.

Sally and Katie arrived promptly at Doctor Clawson's office at 10:15, each of them rightfully nervous. While Sally paged through the new May 1963 issue of *Woman's Day* magazine, in an effort to keep her hands busy, her apprehensive daughter couldn't refrain from biting her fingernails. "Katie, stop that right now...and sit up straight!" her mother scolded.

"Miss Katie Wiederman," a woman in white uniform announced to the patients in the waiting room. Sally wanted to offer her daughter some reassurance before she went into the examination room, so before Katie stood up, her mother held her trembling arm for a moment and whispered, "Don't be afraid, Katie. Everything will be all right. We all have to go through this at some point in our lives...just one of the many blessings of being a woman," she added, with sarcasm. Katie took a deep breath, and then the nurse escorted her into the examination room.

Sally waited impatiently, catching herself gnawing at her own fingernails on occasion. She silently prayed for the doctor to bring good news--that Katie

had simply contracted the flu or some kind of gastrointestinal bug. That was the first time in her life that Sally Wiederman had ever wished one of her children ill.

Regardless of Doctor Clawson's diagnosis, Sally knew that she needed to prepare for the worst possible outcome. If her daughter were, indeed, pregnant, how would she break the news to her husband? All of their lives would be impacted forever, especially Katie's. Moreover, the simple, happy family life they currently enjoyed together would be destined for tribulation.

About an hour later, the nurse returned Katie to her mother in the patient lobby. "Doctor Clawson will be out momentarily to speak with you and Katie, Mrs. Wiederman," she asserted. "Thank you very much," Sally politely replied. She then turned toward Katie and inquired, "Well, how did it go?"

"I guess it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be," Katie admitted, "but it's not something I would want to do again anytime soon!"

About 30 minutes later, Doctor Clawson entered the waiting area and approached Sally and Katie. "You must be Mrs. Wiederman," he addressed Sally. "Yes, doctor," she responded. "So, did you determine what's wrong with my Katie?"

Sally and Katie clutched hands and braced themselves. The Wiederman women searched the doctor's vacant eyes, praying for the diagnosis of a simple viral illness.

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“Well, Mrs. Wiederman,” Doctor Clawson started, “it appears your daughter’s illness wasn’t caused by a virus after all. Your daughter is, indeed, pregnant.”

Katie’s heart skipped a beat. Her eyes became so full of tears that she couldn’t detain them any longer. Katie’s fear and sobbing became inconsolable. Her mother reckoned that a lecture was the last thing Katie needed at the moment, so Sally just held her daughter and let her cry it all out.

When Katie was feeling up to it, Sally escorted her daughter out of the medical office and helped her into their pink and white Dodge Polara family station wagon. Once inside the car, Sally tried to ease her daughter’s suffering with some encouragement.

“Katie, I want you to listen to me,” Sally asserted. She handed Katie a clean handkerchief from her purse, to dry her bloodshot eyes and runny nose. “We will get through this predicament together, one day at a time...and I will find a way to break the news to your father. You let me worry about that. In the meantime, I want you to get plenty of rest and take good care of yourself, as well as our grandchild.”

Upon arrival home, Katie marched right up to her room and closed her bedroom door. She needed some time to herself to process the shocking news. Katie couldn’t believe she was pregnant! She also couldn’t stop thinking about what became of girls who got “knocked up” while they were still in high school.

For starters, Katie would likely be expelled from school before her pregnancy became visible to others. Secondly, she could be forced to marry the father of her unborn child. Worse yet, she might even be whisked off to a school for unwed mothers in a big city far away from home. "Oh, my God!" Katie wailed. "And what will my father, sister and brothers...and all my friends think of me?"

Katie turned on the clock radio atop her bedroom dresser, in search of some comfort or distraction. Ironically, The Four Seasons were belting out their number-one smash hit, "Big Girls Don't Cry," to which Katie blubbered, "Oh, yes they do!" She plopped face-down upon her bedspread and cried until her eyes ran out of tears.

Her fear and dread quickly turned into anger and fury. "That's the song that was playing on the record player the night I met Darren," Katie recalled, her heart filling with scorn. "I wish I'd never gone to that stupid party...or ever met that stupid Darren Munson!" she bellowed.

Although she was quite furious with herself, Katie was hysterically mad at Darren. "How could he have done this to me?" she chanted, drying her eyes repeatedly with her pillow case.

No matter how hard she fought, Katie couldn't control the deluge of water cascading down her flushing red cheeks, especially when she redirected her fury inward, back to herself. "How could I have been

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so stupid?" she squawked, kicking her legs on the bed in a teenaged tantrum.

In the heat of her frustration, Katie decided not to see Darren again, at least until she had some time to think about this most disturbing development in her young life.

Katie's world seemed to be rapidly caving in all around her. Her mind was racing in every direction. She felt as if she were drowning, sinking into an abyss of questions, uncertainty, fear and loss—the loss of her innocence, the loss of her freedom, and the almost certain loss of the pride and respect her parents had always shown towards her.

"How could I have disgraced my loving parents this way?" Katie chided herself. That's what bothered her the most about this embarrassing predicament, as her parents had always been so good to her and so trusting of her. Katie couldn't help but recall the many hardships her parents had endured in their lifetime, not to mention all the sacrifices they had to make for her and their entire family.