

Memories That Linger

In the hills that form the Potter and Redwood Valleys of Northern California, small creeks fed by winter storms empty into Lake Mendocino. A small river flows south from this reservoir through a gentle sloping landscape ribboned with vineyards. The Coastal Mountain Range guides its flow along a windy path to the Pacific Ocean near Jenner. This one-hundred-mile stream runs slow and cool in the summer, muddy and wild in the winter, often overflowing its banks. It is not a great highway of commerce nor does it boast of white rapids. No great cities have risen from its shores nor songs sung about it.

The Spanish called this waterway *San Sebastian* after the patron guardian of rivers. The Pomo Indians before them called it *Shabaikai* or Long Snake. The McGinnis family knew it as the Russian River named after Euro-Asians who established several farms along its lower reaches. Fort Ross, the 19th century Russian stronghold, still stands today on a coastal bluff north of the river's mouth.

The summer hamlet of Rio Nido rests near its bank, partially hidden in the cool shade of centuries old redwood trees. The Eagles Nest Lumber Company in 1876 built a mill in the village's meadow to harvest the big trees. When the last of the adult Coastal Redwoods were cut, the mill was shut down. By the time World War 11 had come and gone, thick walls of two-hundred-foot-high redwoods once again defined Rio Nido, creating seven distinct canyons.

Rio Nido was a safe haven from the troubles and woes of a bustling San Francisco. It was a retreat from three wars, a depression, and the City's biting summers. The area reminded Paddy McGinnis of his boyhood days along the Cork River. This mountain stream carved a path thru the forested Macgillycuddy Valley until emptying into St. George's Channel and the Irish Sea. Rio Nido brought back all the familiar memories of a simpler time characterized by an unbroken bond between friends and relatives alike.

Fleeing his native Ireland in 1928 under sudden and rather mysterious circumstances, Paddy settled in San Francisco's Mission District with his two children, Michael and Mary. His lovely wife, Kathleen, however, did not make the crossing, passing away the year before at the end of a British bayonet.

While on vacation during the summer of 1931, Paddy answered the call of an inconspicuous flyer posted on the entrance to the Rio Nido Lodge: *AUCTION: A sale will be held on Saturday, July 11th, and Sunday, July 12th, at 2:00 and 7: 30 p.m. No sales will be solicited before the auction. The lots to be sold will be selected from those shown in white on the composite map of Rio Nido. Each successful bidder will enter into a purchase contract under the regular printed form used by the Rio Nido Corporation, such contract containing building restrictions, racial restrictions, and other easements of record.*

The slender, wiry Irishman of forty years made his reservation with the auctioneers and later purchased the Rio Nido lot for one hundred dollars. Towards the end of that same summer, the Quonset hut theater in nearby Monte Rio featured a W.W.I movie drama, *Broken Lullaby*, starring Lionel Barrymore, Nancy Carroll and Zazu Pitts. It was an endearing film about a French soldier who felt guilty for killing a German during the war, falling in love with the murdered man's sweetheart.

Memories That Linger

While his son and daughter were entranced by the love story, Paddy's mind was fixated on the promotional giveaways at the cinema that evening. In addition to the usual glassware and green stamps, anyone in attendance could obtain a free building permit upon presenting proof of property ownership.

Soon thereafter, a three-bedroom, two-story summer cottage was built on lot #10 in Rio Nido's Canyon Four. Twelve-inch redwood plank walls and a pitched roof provided sufficient shelter, as insulation was not necessary due to the Mediterranean like climate. The varnished knotty pine interior and a river rock fireplace added an ambiance of congeniality. The kitchen possessed a potbelly wood stove for cooking while minimal storage was available for staples and the like. It wasn't just a coincidence that hunter green and canary yellow happened to decorate not only ninety percent of Rio Nido but also the entire municipal transportation system of San Francisco. More than a gallon or two of the "lost" civil service paint found its way to the Russian River. Upon completion of each cabin, the new owner received a canoe and an icebox, compliments of the homeowner's association. Most of these two hundred permanent residents lived on the fringe of acceptable society. But Paddy appreciated the earthy aura of the locals, and he acquired several friends over the ensuing years.

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The summer of '53 began like most others. On Memorial Day Michael McGinnis arrived at his father's cabin with his wife, Anne, and four children in tow. The twins, Adam and Matt, scrambled for their favorite spot on the porch, invoking squatter's rights. Little Kyra would share her parents' bedroom while fourteen-year-old Sean demanded privacy.

Michael looked forward to the weekends in order to unwind before heading back to San Francisco each Monday morning to his real estate job. Anne, however, had inherited the dubious honor of safeguarding her teenage niece, Katie, until her mother arrived the following week.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, it's the crooner live from Radio City Music Hall, New York, New York. Since we only have fifteen minutes to dazzle you, why don't we start with a song I recorded with Harry James and The Music Makers, climbing to number one on the billboards in 1944."

"Turn that wanker off for the love of Mary and Joseph," an irritated Paddy bellowed.

"How dare you call Frank Sinatra a *wanker*. Why, he's still got *IT* unlike your precious Bing Crosby," his granddaughter, Katie, retorted.

"Oh, is that right, now? Well, for your information, your Italian friend hasn't recorded a hit since 'Some Enchanted Evening'. I usually not be sympathizin' with any Jew-boy, but that Hammerstein fellow be chokin' on his koshered meal tonight."

"Just shut your Irish pie-hole so we can hear the song," Katie insisted. The teenager had inherited her grandfather's argumentative spirit much to everyone's regret.

Paddy gazed at the photo hanging over the river rock fireplace and apologized, "Please now, Michael Collins, dear friend of yesteryear and former I.R.A. freedom fighter, I beg for your forgiveness on this black day in hell when me own flesh and blood brings this guinea music into me house."

With the brouhaha in a full whirlwind downstairs, no one seemed to notice the absence of Adam and Matt. The nine year olds were crawling along the upstairs hallway carrying their dad's fishing pole. The mischievous twosome held the rod over the banister and lowered an object attached to the end of a nylon line.

Katie and her date, Declan, were looking away from the banister as the object descended behind them. Grandpa Paddy shot a double take in the direction of the nylon line, which prompted a curious Sean to angle for a better glimpse as well.

The irreverent prop hovered above Declan's head. Grandpa choked on his own laughter while Sean's jaw sprang open. Little Kyra tugged on her mommy's apron, pointing upwards.

Anne McGinnis kept inquiring about the couple's plans for the evening until she could no longer ignore her daughter's pleas. "Not now, sweetie. Mommy's talking with your Cousin Katie and her guest."

The youngster's rosy cheeks symbolized the many cocktails that inspired her conception in 1949. Champagne curly hair adorned a magna of baby fat lying in a coverlet smoother than the underbelly of a down goose. Unlike her twin brothers, four-year-old Kyra still possessed innocence, riding on the wings of angels.

As Anne glanced in the same direction the toddler was pointing, the mother's eyes widened in shock. Katie followed suit and froze at the sight of her size 36 C Maidenform bra tickling her date's groomed hair.

Katie grabbed Declan as he pivoted in the direction of the underwear and spun him back around. Anne, wanting to save her niece from further embarrassment, brushed vigorously at the young man's hair.

"What in God Almighty are you doing?" Declan said in a tone of bewilderment.

The brassiere disappeared into the heavens. A miffed Paddy admonished the high school senior for using the Lord's name in vain.

"There was one of those ugly wood spiders on your scalp," Anne said.

"Yes. Yes. That's what it was. One of those big old brown, fury wood spiders," Katie agreed. Only a crisis of this magnitude would find aunt and niece uniting on the same front.

Although it was against her principles to lie, it was even a greater shame to have the family name tarnished in such Maidenform fashion. Caught up in the moment, Anne embellished further: "There are thirty-six different species of wood spiders. Some are poisonous. You can't be too cautious."

Contrary to the Baltimore Catechism, a teenager's most valued gift from God was not his soul but his hair. Declan attempted to straighten his sullied hairdo. Katie extended a helping hand to her beau, but he blocked the gesture.

"Don't touch the hair," the frazzled boyfriend said.

The grandfather was quick to admonish the seventeen-year-old once again. "Excuse me, lad, but in this household we prefer ye say, 'don't touch the hair, PLEASE.' Do ye understand me now?"

"Yes, sir. Sorry for the outburst, but I was a bit confused by all the commotion."

A hush descended upon the throng.

"I think I'll freshen up a bit." Declan excused himself and disappeared behind a locked bathroom door.

Memories That Linger

Katie clenched her fists. “I’m going to kill those little brats.” She exhaled and then turned her wrath in the direction of Auntie Anne. “Oh, and thanks so much for that arachnidan gem from *National Geographic*. Spiders? What were you thinking, or were you thinking at all?”

The aunt digressed to an earlier topic and refocused on her niece’s attire. “You made a new Hobble skirt for the dance. It looks lovely, dear, but isn’t it just a tad bit too snug around the hips?”

With the dollar saved from her allowance, a young lady could buy a yard of material, sewing a skirt weekly. With a straight seam and a no flair look to the mid-calf, it gave a tubular appearance accentuating just the right curves. To compliment the crimson Hobble, Katie wore a short sleeve, white blouse with a Peter Pan collar.

“She looks just grand,” Paddy countered.

Katie shot a broad smirk towards her aunt, hands on hips, posing. “Why, thank you, grandpa. It’s nice to know someone around here has an eye for fashion.”

Anne was well aware of her station within the McGinnis hierarchy. Paddy seemed quick to come to the defense of the other relatives, especially his daughter’s brood.

“Don’t tell me I’m going to have trouble with you too,” Anne said. “If you’re not going to behave yourself, the kids and I will just pack up and head back home to leave you with your precious granddaughter and your dead I.R.A. friends.”

“Don’t you slander the best comrade a man ever had. Michael Collins was a person of honor from a time when Irish lasses knew their proper place.”

Exasperated by self-inflicted mental contortions, Sean stood bewildered by an unknown quality that had enveloped his cousin. A sudden clarity shook him and he said, “Oh, my God. Katie has boobs!” The words flew out on their own, impossible to reel back in.

“How dare you, you little snot,” Katie said.

“Sean McGinnis, shame on you,” his mother said. “You were raised better than that.”

“It’s quite obvious that your sons have no more decency than that of a common household pet,” Katie said.

“Sean, Irish lasses be renown for their full figure unlike your agnostic mother who couldn’t breast feed a gnat if she had to,” Paddy added.

Anne dismissed the old man’s comments as simple Tom Foolery and turned back to her robust niece. “Well, you do look rather...” The perplexed aunt paused in search of the right word and then said, “...boobish.”

“What do you know?” Katie snapped. “Grandpa’s right. You’re just jealous.”

Tissue was no longer required with the recent advent of the padded brassiere. There was also the added feature of transforming one’s breasts into perfect cone shapes, allowing even the lopsided Katie to possess a symmetrical figure.

Positioning her pink sweater strategically over Katie’s shoulders, Anne buried her niece’s upper torso under the cashmere fabric. “There...that’s definitely more lady-like.”

“Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Ye got her lookin’ like Mamie Eisenhower for God’s sake,” grandpa said. “It be time to take off the leash, warden.”

“Don’t you belittle the First Lady. This sweater happens to be very stylish.” Wallpaper, plastic dishware and even armchair slipcovers took on the latest craze—First Lady pink.

“Oh, my. There is definitely too much eye shadow,” Anne added. “You don’t want to give Declan the wrong impression, do you?”

The room was in the wake of a category five-hurricane when the bathroom door opened. Hoping to assuage the potential storm, Katie greeted her boyfriend with a tender kiss on the cheek.

“I hope Katie be havin’ all her booster shots, now,” the grandfather whispered to Sean before stepping forward to take a closer look at his granddaughter’s suitor. “So it looks like we got another Irishman on our hands, does it? Your patron saint be of the Deisi clan from Belfast. Saint Declan be a descendant from the kings of Tara, pagans they were. In fact, three of his relatives slept with their own sister, don’t ye know.”

“When did your parents arrive at the river?” Anne asked in an attempt to redirect the conversation.

“Oh, they haven’t shown up yet.”

“You mean you’re alone in the cabin without a chaperone?”

“Don’t worry, Mrs. McGinnis. Katie’s in good hands with All State,” the boyfriend said, palms cupped together.

Sean placed a forefinger into his opened mouth and volunteered a nauseated expression. The grandfather returned a furtive grin.

“You be havin’ my granddaughter home from the dance by midnight, won’t you, lad?”

“Absolutely.”

Upon exiting the cabin, a warm summer breeze greeted the couple, ushering in a potpourri of summer scents. The mixed bouquet of bay leaves, licorice weeds and barbeque ribs served as a soothing elixir for any lingering woes.

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At precisely 12:01 a.m., the concerned aunt ventured outside and sat on the porch swing, peering down Canyon Four. A halcyon ink sky provided a backdrop for a glittering Milky Way. But nature’s bounty could not hold Anne’s attention for long, and she got up to return inside when a moaning sound emanated from the direction of the driveway. Straining to grasp the origin of the disturbance, the aunt’s curiosity pushed her down the cottage steps. She walked toward the ’48 Buick Roadmaster, tracking the animalistic groans. At the rear windows of the black and burgundy Woody, Anne witnessed one of the vehicle’s options not outlined in any Chevrolet brochure. Fully reclined, the second and third passenger rows held two shadowy forms.

Anne flung open the door and convulsed at the sight of Declan caressing and pawing her niece. Katie rushed to button her blouse while Declan snatched up his sweater. In obvious panic he quickened the gnawing action on his Wrigley’s spearmint while combing his hair in a rapid flailing motion.

“Declan, you will return to your cabin immediately,” Anne commanded.

“Yes, ma’am,” and he walked away as he continued to dress.

“You have no right to interfere,” Katie said. “Just mind your own business.”

Memories That Linger

“You were placed in my charge until your mother arrives next Friday. You will do as I say.”

The defiant Katie marched back towards the cottage, saying back over her shoulder, “I’ll damn well do as I please.”

The beleaguered aunt sat alone on the Buick’s tailgate, straining to recall wisdom from Dr. Spock, but the sky’s vastness devoured her effort.

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The village meadow was the heart and soul of Rio Nido. Upon entering this self-contained town from River Road, the annual vacationer encountered an old train station, which serviced the Northwestern Pacific Railroad until 1936. A water fountain stood where the Eagle Nest Lumber Co. once operated. Nearby were the butcher's market and the Five and Dime. Gustavo General Store came next, a must stop to pickup those last minute necessities for the beach. This building overshadowed the one-chair barbershop, which featured the slitzy, a close shaved haircut lasting the entire summer.

A series of connecting structures with a Seven Dwarfs motif housed a soda shop, candy store, pinball arcade and a three-lane outdoor bowling alley. In a separate building was the Cardo Parlor, Harold Smith's first but not last gambling venture. Bordering the entrance to Canyon Two was the twenty-four-room Tudor hotel boasting a cabaret lounge and Italian restaurant. The Rio Nido Dance Hall and adjoining amphitheater were the crown jewels of the entire Russian River Valley.

The twins ran ahead of everyone toward the village center with inner tubes, towels and Dragnet squirt guns in hand. At the end of Canyon Four, an impatient Adam stopped, turned back around and called out, "Grandpa, let's go. If we're late, some no-goods will steal our beach spot."

"Patience, lads. Patience. All good things be comin' to those who wait." Paddy's homily did little to mollify the boys' restlessness. He ducked into the General Store to the sound of more complaints.

Miss Gustavo kept the shelves well stocked with a sundry of vacation necessities: woven calypso hats, inflatable rubber beach toys, postcards, sun lotions, comic books, tobacco, souvenirs and assorted foodstuffs.

Paddy wandered up and down the aisles with little Kyra shadowing him. She pointed towards the cash register and said, "Why do you keep peeking at that lady, grandpa?"

Afraid of detection, the senior skulked behind a stack of canned goods, beseeching the young one for quiet.

"But who are we hiding from?"

Paddy rose with caution. To his chagrin everyone in the store stared in his direction. With a sheepish but hurried gait, the Irishman reached for yesterday's *San Francisco Chronicle*, dropped a quarter on the counter and vanished outside. Miss Gustavo smiled to the other customers with a shake of her head.

Memories That Linger

Once outside, grandpa gestured for all to hurry along. With renewed energy, the flustered grandfather strode ahead of the pack.

Matt scurried alongside. “Did you rob the store, grandpa? Because if you robbed the store, I’m afraid you’ll have to answer some questions.”

“Lad, if ye be wantin’ to reach your tenth birthday, ye had better tighten the lip and walk briskly.”

A tunnel allowed beachgoers to cross under the busy country byway uninhibited and in complete safety. Sean held onto Matt’s inner tube with one hand while the other took hold of Adam’s shirt collar. A switchback trail wound down to the water’s edge where a pedestrian bridge greeted the clan. Matt and Adam broke away from their older brother, but a security guard, sitting on a barstool, slowed them to a walk.

Once across, the twins resumed a harried pace along wooden planks to the beach. They corkscrewed an umbrella into the hot sands, reserving the spot until summer’s end. In a hurry, the boys threw down T-shirts, towels, socks, and shoes and made a dash for the water. Sean opted for the high-dive platform, which was built at the end of a pier. Michael escorted his daughter to the shallows with the promise of swimming lessons to follow.

The overweight father jumped up and down flailing his arms as sprays of water greeted bathers nearby. His frolicking motions frightened his diminutive daughter. Kyra stood wiping tears from her eyes until her father knelt on the rocky riverbed to hold her.

“It’s okay, sweetheart. The water won’t hurt you. In fact, we can learn to let the river be our friend.”

Oblivious to the many onlookers, the desperate father attempted a different approach. Lying outstretched, he kept his head above the waterline and rested his plump belly on the river’s bottom.

“See, honey, this is how we swim. Doesn’t this look like fun,” the commercial riddled adult sputtered.

Then the doting father surveyed the surrounding scene as if for first time. Twenty or so mothers stood over their children clapping. He ascended to his feet, displayed a submissive smile, and with a bow acknowledged the throng’s cheers.

“What was all that about? Were you showing off again?” Anne asked her husband upon his return.

“Daddy funny,” Kyra interjected.

Stalling and still somewhat befuddled, Michael started to dry himself. “Uh...we were putting on a swimming clinic for the others. If you must know, they were quite taken by our aquatic expertise.”

Anne motioned for her red-faced husband to sit next to her on the beach towel. Michael sat down and embraced her hand. Enraptured by the tenderness of the moment, the pair was oblivious to the newcomers behind them.

Feeling the gravitational pull of reality, Anne turned around and said, “Oh, I’m sorry. For heavens sakes...I must have been day dreaming.”

“It’s good to see you, girlfriend.” Agnes Sullivan offered a warm hug while her husband, Jack, and Michael exchanged handshakes.

“Well, it’s about time you two showed up,” Anne said.

The Sullivans were neighbors in the suburban enclave of Burlingame and devout Catholics, attending daily Mass at Our Lady of Angels Church. Always armed with

genuine smiles and giving hearts, they never uttered a blasphemous word. Their adopted son, Erin, was already fitting into size twelve shoes providing a solid foundation for his gangly frame. Erin's optimistic nature often bragged that his foot-long feet got the girls wondering.

Upon reaching his grammar school chum, Erin presented the River Rat salute. Both swept the palm of their hand over their scalps stretching their arm forward in a shake 'n' bake motion.

To Sean's unexpected surprise, Bobby O'Hearn had also joined the merry band. Years had passed without the slightest hint of Christian maturity encroaching on this young man's persona: toss in a dose of Clarabell the Clown; a pinch of Curly; let it simmer in a brew of Lone Ranger Gone Mad, and you have one amusing gumbo. Bobby O'Hearn defied definition. What would be the purpose? After all, he was content living in his own imaginary world.

"Hey, Daddy-O, greetings and salutations from The Legend," Bobby announced.

Sean turned with a dubious look. "*Daddy-O?* From what planet did you just arrive?"

"From the planet Cool, man, and that ain't no jive...Oh, and bye the bye, all you cats may address me as *Robert*. Bobby is sooo lame. Dig it, man?"

For the next three months, Robert Coolcat O'Hearn would attempt to be hip, his latest strategy in the pursuit of cleavage. By adolescent standards, the clock was ticking. Fearful of bypassing his sexual peak with no rewards, he was on a mission. Robert had a date with destiny, confident that by Labor Day his virginity would be a thing of the past.

Agnes Sullivan peered down at Anne. "We haven't seen you since the Confirmation Ceremony. How are you?"

"I'm still waiting for that instant transformation from juvenile to adulthood that the church promised our boys," Anne said. Their intense stare-down of the nearby youths could mean but one thing.

The three lads cowered in obvious guilt. Past transgressions included *Playboy* centerfold, Miss Marilyn Monroe, and the redecoration of a certain classroom. Mrs. McGinnis had gone to great lengths to insure the boys' deliverance from their archenemy, Sister Mary Grace, while Michael found it necessary to make a rather large donation to the church fund. Although things remained strained between Our Lady of Angels and the McGinnis clan, at least the parish had not banished them.

Sensing the boys' discomfort, Paddy interjected, "St. Columbanus, the patron saint of all youth, will guide the lads down the path of righteousness."

"Why you rusty old Irishman...you're still full of the old malarkey," Mr. Sullivan said.

"I be praying for ye, Jack."

"The more the merrier."

"Ye be the unwittin' arm of Satan, himself. Your material ways be the ruination of your family. Burn it before it be too late, I beg ye."

Jack's empty stare pleaded for clarification.

"Paddy has a thing against your new Zenith television set," Anne clarified.

Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan released a collective "Ohhh".

Memories That Linger

A lengthy and awkward silence followed. “Well, that be me cue to leave,” the grandfather said. “Besides it’s just about time to fill up the old feedbag. Can’t start too soon bulking up for winter. Anyone care to join me for a bit of a snack?”

Like a pack of hungry wolves, the three eighth grade graduates sprang to their feet, and all headed towards the concession stands. Canoes, paddleboats, lifejackets, umbrellas, inner tubes, and even swimsuits could be rented. In addition, an array of delectable delights fit to satisfy even the most serious junk food addict awaited one’s consumption. The manager of the boardwalk was part of a family consortium, which owned most of the commercial buildings in the village as well.

Harris Barton approached a handsome, dark haired youth attending the register. “George Fennerman, don’t ask me why I hired your worthless carcass for the summer. I told you an hour ago to stock those shelves. If you’re going to sit around all day doing zilch, you might as well get a job in television.” The Barton family had been booking the Big Bands for years and couldn’t hide their disdain for T.V. Although this high tech gadget had been in existence for only five years, it was sucking the lifeblood from the heart of Rio Nido.

Overhearing this demotion of television, an agreeing Paddy reached out to shake the manager’s hand. “Me sympathies exactly, sir. Let me introduce myself. I be Paddy McGinnis and a full time resident of these parts.”

Mr. Barton ignored the gesture when he caught his slothful employee munching on a bag of cashews. “And take your nuts off the counter.”

“Mr. M,” Robert interjected, “I’m a little short this week with the bread. That’s the straight word from the bird.”

Paddy surveyed the animated youth and marveled at what a queer little lad he was and then forked out four dollars for hamburgers.

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A fluffy coiffure of manicured hair shifted in the breeze as the flirtatious young female swam circles around Declan. Adorning a fashionable Mabs two-piece swimsuit, Cousin Katie glided across the flapping waters with nary a drop of water violating her beautiful head. For the middle age set, however, there was no need to display such false pride. Three-inch curlers covered by an elastic shower cap would serve the purpose.

It was the standard bet, points awarded for various targets: one point for the abdominal area; four points for the chest; and six points for the hair. The winner would obtain sole rights to the June edition of *Playboy* for twenty-four hours.

In a very official voice, Matt proclaimed, “All ready on the firing line.”

A fusillade of water sprayed from their Joe Friday squirt guns while a running verbal score logged the results.

“My hair! My hair!” Looking in the direction of her assailants, Katie’s anger erupted. “Why, it’s you two little brats, again. If I get my hands on you, I’ll...”

Adam and Matt unloaded another volley, hitting the remaining targets.

Declan lurched forward and whisked away the water pistols and hurled them towards the deep end. The young suitor put his arm around Katie as the young couple showed their back to the twins.

The brothers scurried away to the beach to bemoan their loss. The jawing clatter awakened their napping mother.

“That low-life took away our water pistols,” Adam squawked.

“He’s a girly-man,” Matt added before turning to his older brother. “Sean, let’s go beat-up Declan and get our Dragnet guns back. Okay?”

Anne shot a disapproving glare toward her eldest. “You were supposed to watch over the twins.” Receiving no reply, the impatient Anne continued, “Hello, anybody home? Earth to Sean McGinnis, come in.”

With a transistor radio fixed to his ear, Sean was unawares of his mother’s request. “Excuse me, mom. Did you say something?”

“I was trying to say that you were responsible for...”

Just then a bedraggled Katie stomped past her, shaken to the bone while mascara ran down her cheeks. Anne realized that this latest skirmish would serve to rekindle the bad blood with her niece’s mother, and the aunt shook her head at what was to come.