

Baby Sitters Club on Annie National Tour

By maryannespier

Submitted: June 19, 2011

Updated: June 20, 2011

Do you like Musicals? Is Annie your favorite? Then enjoy this all new fanfiction story!

Provided by Fanart Central.

<http://www.fanart-central.net/stories/user/maryannespier/59089/Baby-Sitters-Club-on-Annie-National-Tour>

Chapter 1 - Mary Anne	3
Chapter 2 - Kristy	9
Chapter 3 - Claudia	12
Chapter 4 - Dawn	16
Chapter 5 - Mary Anne II	20
Chapter 6 - Stacey	25
Chapter 7 - Claudia II	32
Chapter 8 - Mary Anne III	35
Chapter 9 - Kristy II	40
Chapter 10 - Dawn II	43
Chapter 11 - Mary Anne IV	47
Chapter 12 - Claudia III	55
Chapter 13 - Kristy III	59
Chapter 14 - Mary Anne V	64
Chapter 15 - Stacey II	69
Chapter 16 - Mary Anne VI	75
Chapter 17 - Dawn III	81
Chapter 18 - Kristy IV	92
Chapter 19 - Mary Anne VII	108
Chapter 20 - Stacey III	124
Chapter 21 - Claudia IV	141
Chapter 22 - Mary Anne VIII	148

Chapter 23 - Dawn IV

159

Chapter 24 - Kristy V

164

1 - Mary Anne

I love the Baby-Sitters Club created by Ann M. Martin, so it's not mine.

I also do not own Annie. It's one of my favorite Broadway Musicals.

Music by: Charles Strouse

Lyrics by: Martin Charnin

Book by: Thomas Meehan

It was Monday night after dinnertime. I had just finished cleaning the kitchen with my stepsister, Dawn Schafer. I was outdoors on the front porch reading *Gone with the Wind*. I'm Miss Mary Anne Spier of Stoneybrook, Connecticut. I'm a happy thirteen-year-old who is an eighth grader at Stoneybrook Middle School.

Dawn is my best friend as well. Her mom, Sharon, grew up and went to high school with Dad. I'm not joking: they dated until they broke up-by Sharon's parents-and Sharon ended up moving to California. She went to college and got married there. She gave birth to a beautiful girl, Dawn, and a handsome son, Jeff.

In the meantime, Dad met Mom during college. Dad even proposed Mom on Valentine's Day at Stamford Fan Zone by her favorite band and song, *The Promise* by Rolling Stones. They danced to that dance on their wedding day. Dad grew up on Tyler Street and he & Mom moved on Bradford Court before they had me on September 22nd. I never met Mom though; she passed on six months later of leukemia at the age of twenty-four.

Dad was too upset to raise me on his own, so I was sent to Mom's parents in Iowa where they raised me until I was eighteen months old when Dad was able to take me back to raise me all by himself.

Sharon had just gotten a divorce when she moved back here with her children. They live in this neat farmhouse on Burnt Hill Road. Jeff wasn't happy here and moved back to California to be with his dad. Several months later, Sharon and Dad got married and we became a stepfamily. Dad, my cat; Tigger, and I live with Sharon & Dawn now after many years on Bradford Court. I've had Tigger since my thirteenth birthday. He was named after a character in *Winnie the Pooh*. He sleeps with me every night.

I also got an adopted brother, Carlos Peters, who goes to Stoneybrook Day School, which is across town. He had already lost his family when he was eight when we adopted him not long ago. His room was our old attic. He's excellent at playing basketball and joins their team. He wants to be a basketball player when he grows up. He'd be better than me since I'm terrible at sports. I take after my dad who is also horrible at sports.

I got two best friends, who live three houses down. Their names are Kayla and Kaylee Willis. They're

twins and from New York City. They weren't home that evening. They went out for dinner. They both mentioned they were going to have supper at Stamford Fan Zone. Whenever we go there, it always reminds me of on how my parents got engaged.

I was still reading when Dad came out to join me. That when when I noticed him there.

"What's up?" I asked.

"I figured I'd come out to join you," replied Dad.

"I just love it when it's a beautiful night," I said.

"Me too, honey," said Dad.

We just talked for a bit. At eight-thirty, I get into my nightgown and went to bed at our school night bedtime hour: ten o'clock. Two hours later, my stomach started to hurt me as usual, but I felt better after I had TUMS.

The next day, at school, my other best friend, Kristy Thomas, came to me at lunchtime and said, "I heard we're having a play of Annie in a few months. There'll be auditions next week."

"Really?" I asked.

"Yes. You'd be perfect for Annie. She's like you; she never knew her parents because they left her at the orphanage as a baby. She's been searching for them for a long time until she learned they've been dead all along," explained Kristy.

"Oh, I never seen Annie before. I've heard of it, just never saw it," I replied.

"Really?" asked Kristy.

"And I don't know if I wanna do it especially with people watching me," I continued.

"Would you still do it if we all audition together?" asked Kristy.

"I guess," I answered.

"Go for it," said Kayla and Kaylee at once.

My problem is that I'm very shy and get nervous. Plus I'd get stage freights. When I was younger, I did this ballet program at YMCA with Kristy and Claudia Kishi. I didn't want to do it. My stomach gets queasy when I get very nervous. On the day of the recital, I got sick and I ended up telling Dad I wanted to quit on that same day. He understood and he said I didn't have to do so.

"I'm sure if we're in it together, you'd be just fine," said Kristy using her comfort words.

"Well, I guess I could give it a try," I replied trusting Kristy's promise.

"Terrific, we'll get a script to help us practice for the parts at the auditions," said Kristy. "We can get it after school."

"Okay," I smiled.

I'm glad I can trust her. She, Claudia, and I grew up together.

"Who are you thinking of auditioning?" I asked.

"Any older orphans; Kate, July, Pepper, or Duffy. You'd be perfect to play Annie. Even if you didn't get the part, you'd still have fun," said Kristy.

"That's true," I agreed. "I think April played Annie when she started middle school."

"Oh, yeah, I remember that she did when she told you about it," said Kristy.

April Livingston and I were good friends from fourth grade in the same class. She moved to Maine right after we finished grade school and we were hurt because we liked each other a lot. We try to keep in touch often. I'm not sure if I still have her number. Maybe she'd tell me tips about auditions. I don't know what she had to do to audition for Annie.

After school, Kristy and I stopped at the school library for the scripts. Later, at home, I did my homework. Then I got out my phone book and couldn't find April's Portland, Maine phone number. I don't know if I threw it out by mistake that was on a loose paper. I looked under 'L' and there was no loose paper there.

I looked online and found it on there and wrote it and the phone book followed by her address. The last time we talked when I was still growing up on Bradford Court, I don't remember her giving me her Portland number. I don't know if she knew I live on Burnt Hill Road now.

At four, I dialed that number and her mother answered.

"Hello," said Mrs. Livingston.

"Hi, Mrs. Livingston, it's Mary Anne," I said.

"Oh, hello, dear. I haven't from you or seen you since you were growing up on Bradford Court for a long time," said her mother.

"I know. Is April home?" I asked.

"Sure. Hold on," said Mrs. Livingston.

That was when April came on excitedly.

"Hi, Mary Anne! It's so nice to hear from you in two years," said April.

"I know, how are you?" I asked.

"Not much," replied April.

"The reason why I'm calling you because Stoneybrook Middle School is going to have the auditions for Annie next week," I said.

"No kidding! That's so awesome," said April.

"And Kristy said I'd be perfect for Annie. The thing is I don't know anything about it; I never saw it before," I said.

"You'll love it, it's my favorite Broadway Musical," said April.

She told me the summary of it.

"When you auditioned for Annie, what did you had to do?" I asked.

"Annie parts just sing the end verse of Tomorrow," replied April. "When I found out I was playing Annie, I was thrilled."

"I remember you telling me what it was like, I just never seen it like I just mentioned," I said.

"I got two copies from that play if you want to send you one to see it," I told her.

"Sounds good; I'll have to give you both my new address and phone number. Dad recently got remarried and we moved on Burnt Hill Road," I said.

"Good for him," replied April.

That's what I did and the new number.

"Thanks," I smiled.

"Not a problem, if you have any questions about the play or the auditions, call me and I'll give you some tips," said April.

"Thanks. Kristy talked to me to do it even though I wasn't sure I would since I'm still shy. But she told me if we're all in it together, I'd be just fine," I explained.

"And she's right," said April.

"Maybe I'll call as soon as I found out about the cast," I said.

"Good idea. The video copy should be at your house this week. I'll see if my mom can mail it tomorrow," said April.

"Okay," I smiled.

"And good luck. Try to take a deep breath and I'm sure you'll make out just fine at the auditions. Are Kristy and Claudia doing the same?" asked April.

"Yes. They both decided to try-out for an older orphan while I'm trying out for Annie," I answered.

"Tell them I said good luck," said April.

"I will," I said.

After we talked for a bit longer, I kept the tips in my mind:

A) Take a Deep Breath

B) Practice

C) Eat a Good Meal

D) Have a Good Night Sleep

I warmed up my voice before practicing the song of Tomorrow after I found the lyrics. I did it three times and felt ready for it. At six, I started dinner while Dawn was setting the table.

"Who was that on the phone earlier?" asked Dawn.

"My old friend, April Livingston, whom I knew from grade school and moved to Portland, Maine before we started middle school," I replied as I explained everything what she told me.

"That's cool," said my stepsister.

"I know. She said if I need more tips about the auditions or the part, I can just call her up. She's sending me one of the two Annie video taped when she was in it," I continued.

"Perfect," said Dawn.

Fifteen minutes later, Dad and Sharon came home from work at the same time.

"You're home in time, dinner is served," I said putting the dinner on the table.

After dinner, I felt a pain coming from my back while clearing off the table.

"What else is new?" I asked.

"Are you okay?" asked Dawn.

"My back just started to hurt me," I replied.

"Go rest your back at the recliner," suggested Dawn. "I can finish the kitchen on my own."

"I can clear the table," I said.

I managed to do so. After that, my back pain was still at it, so I did go sit in the recliner. Dad must have noticed and came to me.

"Are you okay, sweetie?" asked Dad.

"My back is bugging me, that's all," I replied.

"Want an Aleve to make it go away?" asked Dad.

"That'd be great. Thanks," I smiled.

That's what he did. Later, I had a headache, so I took Aleve for that, too. Thank god my back pain was going away at the time.

2 - Kristy

The next day, at school, we had a pretty good day. We were talking about our parts. Then, Mary Anne was talking about what she and April talked about when Cokie-the immature girl-came by.

"You? Audition for Annie? Dream on, wimp girl," said Cokie.

"Mind your business and bug off," I said.

"And I'll prove that I can do it," added Mary Anne. "Another thing, I'm not a wimp."

"I bet you can't," said Cokie.

"How much?" asked Mary Anne.

"Ten dollars for two weeks per day, so if I win, I'd get a hundred forty bucks and if you did it, you'd get the same," replied Cokie. "Plus either you'll have Logan or I'll take him."

"You're on, but Logan part isn't a good bet," I told her.

"Too bad," said Cokie as she left.

Logan Bruno is Mary Anne's sweetheart. He's from Kentucky. He has two siblings, Kerry and Hunter. They started dating a year ago when eighth grade started.

"Cokie is so immature," said Kayla.

"I agree," said Kaylee.

"I bet you're going to win the bet, Mary Anne," added Kayla.

"I believe it, too," said Mary Anne.

That night, Mary Anne was at my house for dinner with her dad's permission. After we had dinner, we decided to practice for our auditions together. We did it for an hour and had fun. We were still doing it when a car honked.

"That's Dad," said Mary Anne as we came down. "Thanks for dinner."

"No problem," said Mom.

Mary Anne left for the car.

"Bye, Kristy, see you tomorrow," said Mary Anne.

"Bye," I said as the car drove off.

A week later, on Monday, it was the day for the try-outs. We were in the auditorium after school. Mary Anne had light lunch because she was starting to get a bit nervous again. Luckily for her, they were doing it in ABC order by their last names. It was her turn thirty minutes later. She took a deep breath at that time.

"Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne.

"Thank you. Very good," said the director, Mr. Robert Jackson.

She came to sit with me.

"I knew you'd do fine," I smiled.

"Me, too. I'm glad they did it in ABC order by our last names," said Mary Anne.

Later, the orphans were next. We sang *It's the Hard-Knock Life* and *You'll Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile* as a group. That was fun. Cokie prays she'd win the bet. Between you and I, Cokie was, well, a little off-key when she tried out for an older orphan. I'll be surprised if she makes it. Kayla and Kaylee auditioned for the choir part, the maids, etc.

After the auditions were over, Mr. Jackson said, "The cast will be up on Friday. The grown-ups will be trying-out tomorrow. Good luck and I'll see you at the rehearsal next Monday after school three to five."

"I'm anxious about the cast to be posted," said Mary Anne.

"Same here," I said.

After the meeting, I was with Mary Anne. I called Mom to let her know about that before I left Claudia's. Then we did homework together. That was when Dawn came up to us.

"The package came in the mail for you, Mary Anne," said Dawn.

"I know what it is," said Mary Anne as she came down to open it. "It's the Annie copy April sent me."

"Swell. We can watch it after our homework is done," I said.

"Okay," said Mary Anne. "Good idea."

After we were done, we did watch it and enjoyed it. We laughed when Pepper said, 'Here it comes again. Ahh!' when Molly wanted Annie to read the note again. That was very funny. Charlie came by for me just after it ended.

"Bye. See you tomorrow," I said.

"Bye, Kristy," said Mary Anne.

3 - Claudia

It was already Friday. I was heading to lunch when I saw the cast list and went to it. Most of us are in it. I saw my name near July!

"Swell," I said excitedly.

Kristy's playing Kate, Mallory got picked to play Molly, Jessi's Tessie, Stacey gets to be The Star-To-Be, Dawn is the understudy for an older oprhan, and guess who gets to play Annie: Mary Anne! Wait until she sees the list. I'm going to surprise her. Watch out, Cokie, get your ten bucks ready for two weeks. I'm surprised that even though Cokie was off-key the other day, she's playing Duffy while Marci's doing Pepper. I went in the lunchroom and saw my pals as I got lunch and sat next to Stace. By the way, both Kayla and Kaylee got their parts, too!

"The cast list is now posted," I announced.

"Who's in it?" asked Kristy.

"I'm July, you're Kate, Mallory got picked to play Molly, Jessi's Tessie, Stacey gets to be The Star-To-Be, and Dawn's the understudy for an older oprhan," I said. "And guess who's playing one of the two older orphans?"

"You mean Cokie made it?" asked Kristy.

"And Marci, right?" asked Mary Anne.

"Bingo. Cokie's playing Duffy and Marci is playing Pepper," I told them. "And Mary Anne, I have a nice surprise to show you after lunch."

"What is it?" asked Mary Anne.

"You'll have to wait and see," I said.

"I can't wait," said Mary Anne.

"What about me and Kayla?" asked Kaylee.

"You both made it, too, to be in the choir parts," I replied.

"Alright!" exclaimed the Willis twins in their soft voices.

After lunch, I took her to the cast list and said, "Take a look at the cast list."

She did and when she saw what I meant- her name next to Annie, she was thrilled!

"Are you serious?" asked Mary Anne as I nodded. "I can't believe I did it."

"I knew you could," I said.

"This is so exciting," smiled Mary Anne.

We went to the other girls.

"She surprised me. I'm playing Annie," said Mary Anne.

They were all happy for her.

"I told you that you could do it and win the bet," said Kayla.

We laughed at that.

"I can't believe you're playing Annie," said Cokie.

"Told you so. So, you lost the bet and owe ten bucks everyday for two weeks," said Mary Anne.

"Fine. I'll do that starting Monday at the rehearsal," said Cokie as she left.

After school, I did my homework and cleaned up for five-thirty. I was just done when Kristy arrived. We do Baby-Sitters Club meetings here Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays until six in my room because I have a private line for my phone.

"Mary Anne is still happy about playing Annie. She's telling it to her dad tonight," said Kristy without saying hello.

"He's going to be so proud of her, too," I added.

"I know," agreed Kristy.

Dawn arrived and said, "Boy, Mary Anne's driving me nuts. She's still excited about today and won't stop talking about it."

"Big deal. What's wrong with that?" asked Kristy.

"It's so tiring after awhile," said Dawn

"Relax," said Kristy.

"And watch her still being thrilled when she tells it to Mom and Richard," added Dawn.

"Will you calm down? Let her get excited. We all knew she could do it and we're all happy for her," said Kristy.

"Sorry to say, Dawn, but I'm going have to agree with Kristy," I said. "You'd be like that if you get a part you wanted."

"Yes, but I'd be driving everyone crazy," said Dawn.

"We'd let you talk about it," said Kristy. "That's what good friends are for."

Mary Anne came in a minute later.

"Here's the star of the play," I said.

She just laughed at that and said, "I can't wait to tell Dad, Sharon, and Carlos the news."

"They'll be happy for you," said Kristy.

"I know," agreed her best friend.

"Can we change the subject?" asked Dawn. "This is very boring to hear it."

"Don't spoil my excitement," Mary Anne told her sister.

"Yeah," Kristy and I agreed.

Dawn was immature during the meeting, but we ignored her when she kept changing the subject. Mallory and Jessi were happy for Mary Anne when she told them. They already knew they were playing Molly and Tessie. They didn't notice Mary Anne's name near Annie. After the meeting, Mary Anne left the meeting without Dawn and I don't blame her.

"She should...," started Dawn.

"Well, who kept being rude by changing the subject when Mary Anne wanted to finish being excited? We all talked about our parts, too," Kristy interrupted.

That was when Dawn left.

"Poor Mary Anne gets cut off even though we ignored Dawn," said Kristy. "It's her business if she wants to be excited."

"I agree," I said.

"Is Dawn jealous just because she didn't get a part?" asked Jessi. "That's a poor excuse."

"I agree. She's lucky about that she's the understudy of an older orphan," said Mallory.

We all agreed with Mallory and Jessi.

4 - Dawn

At home, we found out that Richard's bringing home Chinese, so all we did was set the table. Mary Anne was just about to call April when Richard came home, so she'll wait until after dinner.

"Hi, sweetie," said Richard.

"Hi," said Mary Anne getting the other bag with Chinese.

"Thanks for getting that," said my stepfather.

"No problem," said Mary Anne. "Carlos! Dad just came home with Chinese!"

"Okay," said Carlos as he came down.

"We can just put the food in the bowls. Sharon's running late. Her meeting ends in five minutes," said Richard.

"Okay," said my sister. "I'll wait until she comes home to tell you both the news."

"Good idea. I can't wait to hear it," smiled her father.

"I wonder what is it about," said Carlos.

Mom came home ten to fifteen minutes later.

"Hi, Mom," I said.

"Hi, Dawn," said Mom.

"The cast list is posted today," I told her.

"Who are you playing?" asked Mom.

"The understudy for any older orphans," I replied.

"What about you, Mary Anne, honey?" asked Mom.

"Yes. First of all, Kristy talked to me into trying out for Annie. All we had to do is to sing the end verse of Tomorrow like April mentioned to me. This is funny: Cokie made a bet with me. If I win, she'd owe me ten dollars every day for two weeks and if I didn't, I'd have to do the same thing," explained Mary Anne.

They just laughed at that including Carlos.

"Unfortunately for her, she lost that bet," continued Mary Anne.

"So, you're saying you got the role of Annie?" asked Mom as my sister nodded. "Good for you."

"That is wonderful," said my stepfather as he hugged her.

"Congratulations, Mary Anne!" smiled my adopted brother.

"The others were glad for me, too. They all knew I could do it. I wasn't sure if I should, but Kristy told me if we're all in it together, I'd be just fine," Mary Anne kept on.

"That's true," agreed Mom.

"That's all we ever...," I started.

"Let her finish telling us about it," Mom interrupted me.

"Anyway, April said I can call her as soon as the cast list was posted. In fact, I was about to call her when I saw you come home, Dad, so may I call her after I help Dawn clean the kitchen?" asked Mary Anne.

"Of course of you can," replied Richard.

"April sent me one of the two copies of Annie that was videotaped when she was in it herself playing Annie. I'm glad she did because I never saw Annie. So, Kristy, Dawn, and I watched and loved it," said Mary Anne.

After dinner, I said, "Can you at least stop talking about stuff like that?"

"There's nothing wrong with that when anyone's excited about something. That's normal. Don't you realize that?" asked Mary Anne. "I'm glad Kristy talked to me into doing it otherwise I wouldn't feel that way. I do feel comfortable being on stage with our friends."

After she was done with the dishwasher, she went to get the portable phone as she dialed April's number on the way up to her room. April answered.

"Hello," said April.

"Hi, April," said Mary Anne.

"Hi, Mary Anne, how did it go with the try-outs the other day?" asked April.

"I did just fine. They did it in ABC, which was good enough for me. The cast list was up today," replied Mary Anne.

"And?" asked April.

"First of all, Kristy is playing Kate and Claudia is playing July. The next thing I knew Claudia was onto something and then she said she had a surprise to show me. Then she brought me to the cast list. That was when I noticed I was picked to play Annie," explained Mary Anne.

"Swell! I knew you could do it," said April. "I'm glad Kristy and Claudia made it, too."

"Me, too. The other girls were happy for me. I already told Dad and Sharon earlier and they were thrilled for me as well," said Mary Anne.

"Are the rest in the play, too?" asked April.

"Yes. Mallory is doing Molly, Jessi got picked to be Tessie, Stacey's The Star-To-Be, and Dawn's the understudy for an older orphan while Kayla and Kaylee have chorused parts," said Mary Anne. "Here's the funny part: Cokie Mason made a bet with me. If I win, she'd owe me ten dollars every day for two weeks and if I didn't, I'd have to do the same thing."

She just laughed and said, "You won the bet."

"Yep. So, starting Monday at the rehearsal, she's giving me ten bucks everyday," continued Mary Anne.

"Good," said April.

"She was off-key, but I was surprised she got a part," said Mary Anne.

"Who did she audition for?" asked April.

"An orphan, she's playing Duffy and this other girl, Marci, whom I'm not crazy about, is playing Pepper," said Mary Anne.

"Good luck with them," teased April.

They laughed at that.

"What I don't like about Cokie is she would try to steal my boyfriend, Logan Bruno, from me and what gets me mad the most is that he would wait until the last minute to tell her that he has me. I blame it on him for that," said Mary Anne. "I haven't seen Marci doing it like she used to do."

"I don't blame you. If I ever catch my boyfriend, Andrew Gomez, doing that, I'd smack him or break up with him," said April.

"What I do is until he apologized to me, I break up with him. I hate it when he cheats on me. If that was me, he'd be mad," said Mary Anne.

"I know, at least you wouldn't wait until the last time," said April.

"I agree with you, I always tell any boys that if they try to steal me from Logan," said Mary Anne.

"That's right," said April. "Anyway, are you free next weekend?"

"Not sure, why?" asked Mary Anne.

"I'm thinking of coming to visit you for the whole weekend starting next Friday through Sunday," replied April.

"Awesome! I like that idea," said Mary Anne.

"I already checked with my mother and she liked the idea, too since she knows I haven't seen you for a long time," said April.

"I could ask my dad now," said Mary Anne.

She did and Richard loved the idea as well. April was thrilled to hear that.

"I'll call you next Thursday to let you know about what time is my flight next Friday," said April.

"Sounds good," said Mary Anne.

"I can hardly wait until I see you again," said April.

"Same here," said Mary Anne.

After they talked, she was still thrilled about that.

5 - Mary Anne II

The next day, I was still asleep at eight.

"Aren't you and Mary Anne going to spend the day together?" asked Sharon.

"Not right now. Mary Anne doesn't get up at this hour," replied Dad.

I got up an hour later and came downstairs.

"Morning, honey," smiled Dad.

"Morning," I said.

"We can spend our day together in an hour," said Dad.

"Sounds good to me," I said.

After breakfast, I went to get dressed to get ready. Dad and I left the house to spend the day at around ten. We always enjoy to spend entire day together. I got sort of quiet on the way. Why? I'm worried about the way Dawn treated me last night. Dad noticed how quiet I was.

"You've been quiet since we left the house. Is everything okay, Mary Anne?" asked Dad.

"I'm just worried about Dawn. She's been behaving strange since I got excited about the role. I thought she'd be happy for me," I replied. "I like telling people when I get excited about it."

"I know," said Dad.

"I told her it's normal to feel that way. I hope she'll realized that," I said. "The others get mad at her when she doesn't let me tell anyone how excited I am about playing Annie."

"You should try talking to her later on," suggested Dad.

That makes sense to me.

"Maybe," I said.

Later that afternoon, back at home, I wasn't exactly ready to talk to Dawn because I knew she might be act worse even more. Then it came to me: I think she's jealous that she didn't get a part. How am I supposed to tell Dawn how I'm worried about her because the way she's been acting since I got the part of Annie? I can't help being excited, it's my business. That night, at six, I was a nervous wreck. Dad came up to me.

"Dinner's ready, Mary Anne," said Dad.

"I'm too worried to eat anything at this moment," I said.

"Are you okay? Did you talk to Dawn yet?" asked Dad sitting next to me.

I just shook my head and said, "I'm trying to figure out what to say. I don't know if she might be jealous of me because she's the understudy of an older orphan. I just want to tell how worried I am about her."

"That could be a good start," agreed Dad.

"I'll talk to her when I'm ready," I said.

"Take your time," said Dad squeezing my hand.

It took me forever to be ready to have a talk with Dawn. Unfortunately, I still wasn't ready to do so. After dinner, Dad knocked on the door and came in to be with me.

"Are you alright now?" asked Dad.

"I'm still not ready to talk to Dawn," I replied. "I don't know how it would go. I got a bad feeling it might not go very well."

At eight-thirty, I managed to talk to Dawn to let her know how she worries me about her behavior.

"I'm perfectly fine," said Dawn.

"It's not the way you've been acting. Are you jealous since you only got the understudy for an older orphan? If you were excited, I'd let you keep talking about it," I said.

"No you....," Dawn started.

"Yes I would. I don't interrupt like you do. That is very rude," I cut her off. "You know what? Forget what I told you I'm done talking to you."

I took off as I headed back to my room. I knew this would happen.

"How rude," muttered Dawn.

I didn't hear what she said, but I don't care, I ignored her anyway.

"Uh-oh. I bet that didn't go very well," said Dad after he noticed how mad I was. "I'll go see Mary Anne."

In my room, I was on the windowseat. Dad knocked and came in as he sat next to me.

"What happen? I'm guessing that didn't go well at all," said Dad.

"I'm done talking to her," I said as I told him about it. "So, I also said to forget what I said."

"I don't blame you, sweetie," said Dad.

In the middle of the night, I was wide awake at twelve-twenty-five. I'm still concerned about Dawn. In fact, I had tears rolling down. I got out of bed and went to sit on the windowseat. When Dad came in before he went to bed, he noticed I was up and went to sit with me.

"It's late, sweetheart, are you okay?" asked Dad.

"I'm still concerned about Dawn," I replied. "It breaks my heart about it."

"I know," said Dad comforting me.

Three hours later, I had a bad dream about it and woke up from it. In fact, it came back within two hours later. I could not go back to sleep at all. I was shaking. I guess Dad knew because he came in to be with me.

"Are you okay?" asked Dad.

"I woke up from two bad dreams two hours apart. I'm still worried about Dawn," I said.

"It'll be alright," said Dad stroking my hair.

The next day, I had a bad day especially at home.

"Don't even think about embarrass me telling anyone about your part," said Dawn.

I ignored her. If I want to talk about it, it's my choice, not hers.

"Are you listening to me?" asked Dawn.

I still ignored her as I got up to be away from her and stare out the window. It was raining and I was b-o-r-e-d.

"Stop ignoring me," said my sister.

"Leave me alone, I'm not even talking to you right now," I said as I went up to my room.

Dawn rolled her eyes.

"Don't roll your eyes," said Sharon. "She did nothing wrong to you and all you ever did was stopping her from telling people about her part. After all, she is the star of the play. What if they want to ask her? She noticed you've been behaving very weird and it needs to end. She tried to talk to you until you gave her a hard time."

"But it's so tiring to hear it," said Dawn.

"No buts. It's her business, not yours," said my stepmother firmly.

In my room, I was reading a book of Little Women when I heard a knock on my door as I opened a bit and noticed it was Dawn.

"Go away. You've been very rude to me. I told you it's normal to be thrilled. What's wrong with that? Nothing. So, just go away," I said as I shut the door to lock it.

I went back to reading Little Women.

"Mary Anne, it's time for lunch," I heard Sharon said.

I wasn't hungry at all. Dad was out back doing a few things in the rain. Sounds weird, huh? He does that if it's raining light enough. If it's raining hard, forget it.

"Mary Anne, it's lunchtime," said Sharon again.

I still didn't come down.

"Is Mary Anne okay?" asked Dad who came back in.

"I'm not sure she didn't come down at all," replied my stepmother.

"I'll go see if she's alright," said Dad as he came up. "Mary Anne, sweetie."

I was relieved to hear his voice, so I got up to unlock and opened the door.

"Is everything okay? You didn't come down for lunch," said Dad.

"I'm just not hungry," I said.

"How's everything this morning?" asked Dad.

"Worse. Dawn's driving me nuts," I replied as I told him about it. "My heart's still breaking to see her behavior."

"I know," said Dad putting his arm around me.

That night, Dawn made me feel even worse. I noticed her with Logan telling her that I've been driving her 'crazy'. He just laughed and told her to drop it. She even told him I'm not special playing Annie. Once I heard that, I was mad and hurt at the same time. Not special? That was when I burst into tears and ran up to my room.

"What did Dawn do this time?" asked Sharon.

"I know, this is getting old now. We need to punish Dawn if we have to," said Dad.

Logan came in to tell them about what Dawn said.

"Really?" asked Sharon. "Where is Dawn?"

"She's out there," replied Logan. "I guess Mary Anne heard that because I saw her burst into tears."

"I'm glad you told us that. I'll go see Mary Anne," said Dad.

In my room, I was on the windowseat while I was crying. Dad came in and noticed that as he went to sit with me. I was facing the window and had my face buried in the pillow. I didn't notice him there when I felt him putting his hand on my shoulder squeezing it.

"Logan just told me about what Dawn said about you," said Dad.

I was still facing the window while I was still crying. He was rubbing my shirt to comfort me.

"It's going to be okay, sweetie," said Dad.

He turned me over and put me on him as he had me around him while he was stroking my hair. When I noticed it, I hugged him tightly.

"It'll be alright," said Dad. "She must have really hurt you."

I just nodded while I just kept crying. I didn't say a word for the entire time. That was when Sharon came by.

"How she is doing?" asked Sharon.

"You could tell Mary Anne is hurt," whispered Dad.

"Dawn is grounded until she apologizes to Mary Anne," said my stepmother.

"Good idea," agreed Dad.

6 - Stacey

The next day, at school, I noticed Mary Anne was having trouble with Dawn. Why? 1) Mary Anne wasn't talking to Dawn and 2) Dawn kept preventing Mary Anne to tell us how excited she was because it was the first day of the rehearsal. Later, Logan told us why Mary Anne was very angry with Dawn and we were all shocked.

"Why did Dawn tell you Mary Anne's not special to play Annie?" asked Kristy.

"Beats me. I did tell her to drop it," replied Logan. "Mary Anne heard Dawn and got very upset. I told Mr. Spier about that."

"Good," said Claudia.

"Dawn needs to learn to cut it out and not to hurt Mary Anne," said Kayla.

"I agree with you," said Kaylee.

That was when Mary Anne went right by us. She was still very unhappy.

"Poor Mary Anne," said Kristy.

"She is so immature," said Dawn.

Not one of us said a word to Dawn.

"I'll go find Mary Anne," said Kristy as she took off to find her best friend.

"Leave her...," Dawn started off.

"Why did you hurt Mary Anne by telling Logan that she's not special playing Annie?" I interrupted her.

"At this moment, you're the one who's immature," added Claudia.

"Yeah," agreed the Willis twins.

"Come on, let's go see Mary Anne," said Logan.

We left. Both Mary Anne and Kristy were in the library when we found them. Poor Mary Anne was still hurt because of Dawn.

"How is she?" asked Claudia.

"She's still upset," replied Kristy.

"Forget about the whole thing and get lunch with us," I said.

"I don't want anything right now," said Mary Anne.

"Do you still want to be with us though?" asked Claudia.

"I guess so," replied Mary Anne.

"Come on," said Kristy.

At lunch, Logan joined us, which he usually does. Mary Anne wasn't in the mood to have anything at all.

"I'm sure you'll ignore it during the rehearsal," said Kristy.

"I hope so," said Mary Anne.

"I know so," smiled Kristy.

"I agree," said Kayla.

"Me, too," said Kaylee.

After school, we went to the auditorium for our first day of practice. Mary Anne is starting to forget about what Dawn did, which was a good sign. She's too busy getting excited to start practicing. At three, Mr. Jackson got on the stage to the microphone.

"Hello, everyone. Congratulations to the ones who made the auditions and welcome to your first day of rehearsal," said Mr. Jackson. "I'll giving you the folders with your names and parts as you come on the stage to get started."

That's what he did by calling our names by ABC orders. We were all set after the last person came on.

"This is your singing coach, Mrs. Lydia Johnson, she'll be helping with your singing voices and will be the pianist during the play," announced the director.

"Hello, it's nice to meet you all," said Mrs. Johnson.

"Let's start warming your singing voices before practicing," said Mr. Jackson. "Oh, I want to the meet the dog who is playing Sandy first."

That was when the dog came to Mr. Jackson.

"This is Rocky. Mary Anne, he'll be playing your dog, Sandy," said Mr. Jackson.

"You mean when Annie met him during the scene of Tomorrow and the officer thought Sandy was a

stray when Annie says he's her dog and would have to prove it by calling him?" asked Mary Anne.

"That's right," replied the director.

We were surprised on how she knew that.

"How did she know that?" asked Marci.

"That because one of my old friends was in Annie and sent me a copy of the play version that was video taped. She played Annie and she loved it," explained Mary Anne.

"Wow," said Kayla and Kaylee.

"Why don't you try calling Rocky to practice?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"Okay," said Mary Anne as she knelt down. "Rocky. Here, Rocky."

He went to her and sat down.

"Good boy, Rocky," said Mary Anne.

"Good job," said Mr. Jackson.

We started warming up for the songs.

"First up Mary Anne singing Maybe," said Mr. Jackson.

Mary Anne came up and sat down as the song started.

"Maybe far away or maybe real nearby. He may be pouring her coffee. She may be straightening his tie. Maybe in a house, all hidden by a hill. She's sitting playing piano. He's sitting paying a bill. Betcha they're young, betcha they're smart. Bet they collect things like ashtrays and art. Betcha they're good. Why shouldn't they be? Their one mistake was giving up me. So, maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe," sang Mary Anne.

"Good, now onto the second part of Maybe," said Mr. Jackson as the piano was still playing.

"Betcha he reads, betcha she sews. Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes. Maybe they're strict as straight as a line. Don't really care as long as they're mine. So, maybe now this prayer's the last one of its kind. Won't you please come get your baby? Maybe," sang Mary Anne as the song ended.

We all noticed Mary Anne sang without the script.

"Good job. And you had the vocals where you wanted to be," said Mr. Jackson.

"Thanks," said Mary Anne.

"Next up are the orphans with Mary Anne for It's the Hard-Knock Life," announced the director.

The piano started playing.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us," they sang.

"Instead of treated," sang Mary Anne.

"We get tricked," they sang.

"Instead of kisses," sang Mary Anne.

"We get kicked. It's the hard-knock life," they sang. "We got no folks to spoke of, so it's the hard-knock role we hoe."

"Cotton blankets," sang Mary Anne.

"Instead of wool," they sang.

"Empty bellies," sang Mary Anne.

"Instead of full, it's the hard-knock life," they sang.

"Don't it feel like the wind is always howling?" sang Mary Anne.

"Don't it seem there's never any light?" sang Claudia and Kristy.

"Once a day, don't you wanna throw the towel in?" sang Mallory and Jessi.

"It's easier than putting up a fight," sang Marci and Cokie.

"No one's there when your dreams at night get creepy, no one cares if you grow or if you shrink, no one dries your eyes when they get weepy," sang Mary Anne.

"From the crying you think this place's sink. Oh!" they sang. "Empty-bellies life, rotten-smelly life, full-of-sorrow life, no-tomorrow life."

"Santa Claus we never see," sang Mallory.

"Santa Claus, what's that? Who's he?" sang Mary Anne.

"No one cares for you a smidge when you're in the orphanage," they sang.

"You'll stay up till this dump shines like the top of the Chrysler Building," said Mallory pretending to be Miss Hannigan.

"Yank the whiskers from her chin. Jab her with a safety pin. Make her drink a mickey finn," they sang. "I

love you, Miss Hannigan."

"Get to work now! Strip the beds! I said get to work!" said Mallory.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us. No one cares for you a smidge when you're in an orphanage. It's the hard-knock life, it's the hard-knock life, it's...the...hard-knock...life!" they sang as the song ended.

"Good work. Now, it's Mary Anne with Rocky and the officer for the song of Tomorrow," announced Mr. Jackson.

The song started.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne.

"Hey, you! Little girl. Come here," said Mr. Lins the officer.

Mary Anne went to him and said, "Yes, officer?"

"That dog there. Haven't I seen him around here before? Isn't he a stray?" asked Mr. Lins.

"A stray? Oh, no, officer, he's my dog," replied Mary Anne.

"Your dog, huh? So, what's his name?" asked Mr. Lins.

"His name? Oh, his name is, um, Sandy. Yes, that's right, Sandy. I call him Sandy because see, his fur is a nice, sandy color," said Mary Anne.

"Sandy color, alright. Let's see if Sandy answers to his name," said Mr. Lins.

"Answer? You mean when I call him?" asked Mary Anne.

"Right. When you call him by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him," said Mary Anne.

"Call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay," said Mary Anne going to the center stage and kneels down. "Sandy. Here, Sandy. Here, boy."

Rocky went to her.

"Good, Sandy. Good old Sandy," said Mary Anne.

"Maybe he is your dog. But the next time you take him out, I want to see him with the leash and the license otherwise he goes to the pound and they'll put him to sleep. Do you understand?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir, I understand with the leash and license," said Mary Anne.

"Now get along before you catch a cold in this weather," said Mr. Lins.

"Oh, I don't mind the weather," said Mary Anne as the piano started up again. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended.

"Good job," said Mr. Jackson. "Let's take a break for a bit before we can continue on."

We did and talked. We even commented how good Mary Anne was to sing without any scripts so far. After the rehearsal, Mr. Jackson gave us the schedule; we'll be practicing every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from three to five. That's good because we can just walk over to Claudia's for BSC meetings on those days. Dawn's still punished, so she can't attend any meetings or baby-sit.

At Claudia's and the meeting, I said, "Guess what today is?"

They all groaned as they gave me the money since it was Dues Day. As a treasurer, I collect them every Monday. We use it for Claudia's phone bills, Kristy's brother to give her rides, and so on.

"I'll tell Charlie not to get me until six since the practice ends at five on the meeting days," said Kristy.

"This means no one's available until after five on the meeting days, but free on non-meeting days," said Mary Anne doing her part as a secretary.

The phone rang. We made sitting arrangements for Mary Anne to baby-sit Jenny tomorrow and Thursday.

"I'm unavailable this weekend. April's coming down from Maine until Sunday," said Mary Anne as she puts her name in unavailable list.

"So, you won't able to baby-sit for the entire weekend?" asked Kristy.

"That's correct. April and I are thrilled to be together," said Mary Anne.

"I bet. Claudia and I haven't seen her since grade school," said Kristy.

"I know," agreed Claudia.

7 - Claudia II

After the meeting, I was helping Janine making dinner and setting the table.

"How did the first rehearsal go today?" asked Janine.

"Good. Guess who sang without the script?" I asked.

"Who?" asked Janine.

"Mary Anne," I said. "We were all shocked about it."

"How did she do that?" asked Janine.

"She and Kristy watched a play verison of Annie that was videotaped. Our old friend sent one to Mary Anne the other day," I replied.

"Wow," said Janine.

"I know, I never seen anyone doing that without looking at their scripts," I said.

"Smart," said Janine. "Are any of those songs were hard for her?"

"No," I replied. "Not even NYC or A New Deal For Christmas. She even liked I Don't Need Anything But You."

At Mary Anne and Dawn's house, Mary Anne overheard Dawn who was saying stuff that isn't true like telling Logan that Mary Anne's too shy to do anything.

"Just drop it," said Logan. "If Mary Anne was too shy to do stuff, she wouldn't be in Annie."

"She studders," said Dawn.

"You know that's not true," said Logan. "Don't ever gossip about my girlfriend. What you're telling me is a lie."

Mary Anne came down angrily and stormed out the door.

"See what you did?" asked Logan as he went out to her.

"If you see Dad, tell him I'll be Claudia's," said Mary Anne.

"I don't blame you," said Logan.

Back at my house, I heard the doorbell rang and I went to answer. It was Mary Anne.

"Mary Anne, is everything alright?" I asked after noticing she was very angry as she told me everything. "Oh, my lord. How awful!"

"I know," agreed Mary Anne.

Logan must have told Mr. Spier about everything when he got home because he arrived five minutes later.

"Logan told me about what happen. Where's Mary Anne?" asked Dad.

"She's very upset. She told me everything, too. Let me go get her," I said as I went to get her in my room. "Mary Anne, your father's here. Do you want to see him?"

"Okay," said Mary Anne who was sobbing.

"Come on," I said.

We came down as she went to hug him while she was still crying.

"It'll be okay, sweetie," said Mr. Spier.

"I'm so sick and tired of Dawn's behavior," said Mary Anne.

"I know," said her father.

"If she wants, she can stay here for dinner to have a break from Dawn tonight," I said.

"That'd be a good idea," agreed Mr. Spier. "Do you want to do that, Mary Anne?"

She nodded while wiping her tears and said, "Yes, please. I'm not in the mood to face Dawn at all."

At dinner, Mary Anne was the only one who didn't say a word. We were having tacos.

"You're quiet tonight, honey. Are you okay now?" asked Mom who knew everything.

"You could tell she's still mad at what Dawn said to her," I replied.

"That's a shame," said Dad.

"I hope she won't be like that when April is here from Maine for the weekend," said Mary Anne.

"Same here, it'll be embarrassing especially with company," I said as Mary Anne agreed.

"Thank goodness I'll be away from Dawn tomorrow and Thursday when I baby-sit for Jenny," said Mary Anne.

"That's true," I agreed.

After dinner, Mary Anne saw her dad's car pulled up in the driveway.

"I'm leaving. Thanks for dinner," said Mary Anne.

"No problem," I said as she leaves for the car.

I feel bad for Mary Anne. There is no need for Dawn to tell people things that aren't true. Good thing Logan told Dawn to drop it.

8 - Mary Anne III

I didn't say one word to Dawn since I got home from Claudia's. I was in my room putting my nightgown on.

"You are so rude to walk by me without saying hi to me," said Dawn.

Ha. Look who's talking. I ignored her for the whole time while reading *Gone With the Wind*. I went to bed at ten thirty-thirty minutes past my bedtime-I forgot it was a school night. I didn't sleep well later that night. In fact, I didn't fall asleep until around three.

The next day, I was so tired that I took a shower before I went to school. At school, the girls were shocked what Claudia and I told them.

"Honestly, Dawn's behavior has gotten way too far," said Kayla.

"She needs to drop it," added Kaylee.

After school, I went home on the way to Jenny's first since it wasn't until three-thirty. I went there at three-fifteen and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Prezioso opened the door.

"Hi, Mary Anne, come on in," said Mrs. Prezioso as I came inside. "Let's see, Jenny's in the den watching a movie. She wants to have a picnic tonight and Thursday."

"Sounds good to me," I agreed to the idea.

"Mr. Prezioso has to work late all week, which is why I needed a sitter tonight and Thursday. He'll be home after me. I have a meeting until ten on those two nights, so I'll be back at ten-thirty," continued Mrs. Prezioso. "In case of an emergency, my cell phone is on the fridge."

"No problem," I said.

When she left, I went to the den to join Jenny.

"Hi, Jenny," I greeted her.

"Hi, Mary Anne," she greeted me back.

"I see you're watching *Snow White*," I said.

"Yes," said Jenny.

"Mind if I watch it with you?" I asked.

"Okay," replied Jenny as I sat with her.

Jenny trusts me. If she wants to do something else, I'd let her unlike most other girls. She'd have a fit to get them to change their minds. We had a picnic at between six and six-fifteen. We had ham and cheese sandwiches. Jenny helped me clean up. At seven, Jenny found Annie.

"Isn't this the old version with Aileen Quinn?" I asked noticing it was made in 1982.

"Yes. Mommy got that for me two months ago," answered Jenny.

"That's cool. An old friend of mine sent me one of the play versions she was in. She played Annie when in sixth grade," I told her.

"Really?" asked Jenny.

I nodded and added, "Stoneybrook Middle School's doing Annie this year. The other girls and I are in it."

"Cool," said Jenny.

"Kristy, Jessi, Mallory, and Claudia are the older orphans, Stacey's the Star-To-Be, and do you want to know who'll be playing Annie?" I asked as Jenny nodded. "Me."

"You're playing Annie?" asked Jenny.

"Yes," I replied.

"Wow, you must be excited," said Jenny.

"I sure was," I smiled.

"Who are names of the orphans the girls are playing?" asked Jenny.

"Kristy is Kate, Claudia is July, Mallory is Molly, and Jessi is Tessie," I replied. "Dawn is the understudy of an older orphan."

"That's awesome," said Jenny.

"My other best friends, Kayla and Kaylee, have choir parts like the maids," I said.

"Cool," said Jenny.

"I know, when we practiced the songs yesterday, I did most of the songs without looking at the script," I said.

"You did?" asked Jenny in a shocked tone.

"Yes, everyone was shocked about that and told me I did excellent," I replied.

"Wow," said Jenny.

At nine-thirty, I put her to bed and read her a story until she fell asleep. An hour later, Mrs. Prezioso came home. She paid me and offered to bring me home. I thanked her and went inside.

"Hi, honey, how did it go tonight?" asked Dad.

"Good. Mrs. Prezioso offered to give me a ride home," I replied.

"That's good," said Dad.

After we talked for a bit, I went to get comfy. I went to bed at ten-fifty. At midnight, I was wide awake as I got up and came downstairs. Dad, who was in the kitchen, noticed I was up.

"Are you alright, sweetie? It's late, you should be in bed," said Dad.

"I couldn't sleep. I still can't stop thinking about Dawn's hurtful words," I said in a lowered voice.

"It'll be alright," said Dad.

"I'm just trying to forget about it," I said. "But it's very hard to do so."

"At least the rehearsal helps you focus on your lines instead," said Dad.

"That's true," I agreed. "I just hope it'll stay that way."

The next day, at school, I was taking a math test and I was done by the time Cokie tried to peek over, but I got up-in time-to pass it in. Later, I was doing science test and was the third one done. It was only science vocabulary and multiple choices. It's not really that hard at all. I figured I'd start my English homework to keep myself busy. I was almost done when the bell rang to let school out for the day.

After I visited my locker, I went to the auditorium for the rehearsal. I got on the stage to get ready. We're just singing this week. Then we'll do act one scenes one through four on Monday. Rocky came to me and sat down. At three, Mr. Jackson and Mrs. Johnson came in.

"Hello, everyone," said Mr. Jackson. "Let's start warming up before we start singing."

We did that for a few times. I knew I was up first as I sat down while the song started.

"Maybe far away or maybe real nearby. He may be pouring her coffee. She may be straightening his tie. Maybe in a house, all hidden by a hill. She's sitting playing piano. He's sitting paying a bill. Betcha they're young, betcha they're smart. Bet they collect things like ashtrays and art. Betcha they're good. Why shouldn't they be? Their one mistake was giving up me. So, maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe," I sang as the song continued. "Betcha he reads, betcha she sews. Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes. Maybe they're strict as straight as a line. Don't really care as long as they're mine. So, maybe now this prayer's the last one of its kind. Won't you please

come get your baby? Maybe."

The song ended. The rest joined for the song for It's the Hard-Knock Life. Then I was with Rocky as the song began.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," I sang as the song paused while Mr. Lins enters.

"Hey, you! Little girl. Come here," said Mr. Lins the officer.

I went to him and said, "Yes, officer?"

"That dog there. Haven't I seen him around here before? Isn't he a stray?" asked Mr. Lins.

"A stray? Oh, no, officer, he's my dog," I replied.

"Your dog, huh? So, what's his name?" asked Mr. Lins.

"His name? Oh, his name is, um, Sandy. Yes, that's right, Sandy. I call him Sandy because see, his fur is a nice, sandy color," I said.

"Sandy color, alright. Let's see if Sandy answers to his name," said Mr. Lins.

"Answer? You mean when I call him?" I asked.

"Right. When you call him by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him," I said.

"Call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay," I said as I walked away to the center stage and kneeled down. "Sandy. Here, Sandy. Here, boy."

Rocky came to me.

"Good, Sandy. Good old Sandy," I said.

"Maybe he is your dog. But the next time you take him out, I want to see him with the leash and the license otherwise he goes to the pound and they'll put him to sleep. Do you understand?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir, I understand with the leash and license," I said.

"Now get on before you catch a cold in this weather," said Mr. Lins.

"Oh, I don't mind the weather," I said as the song started up. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended. After the rehearsal ended, we walked to Claudia's for the meeting. At the meeting, the phone ran nonstop. Kristy answered the fourth call.

"Baby-Sitters Club. Hi, Mom. Oh, I see, you need a sitter for Karen and Andrew on Saturday from three to five? I wish I could, but I can't, Mom, I got a book report due Monday. Okay. I'll let you know tonight at home. Bye," said Kristy as she hung up.

Almost no one was available until I had an idea.

"I know April is coming Friday, but maybe I'll take over and she can come with me," I said.

"Good idea. Thanks, Mary Anne," said Kristy.

9 - Kristy II

Later, at home, I told Mom that Mary Anne will take over to watch Karen and Andrew.

"She decided to bring April with her," I said.

"Okay," said Mom.

On Friday, after the rehearsal for the songs, Mary Anne told me she had to her house to fetch April who would be there any minute.

"So, I'll meet you all at Claudia's after she gets there. Do you mind she goes there with me?" asked Mary Anne.

"Sure, I can't wait to see her again," I said.

At Claudia's, Mary Anne and April arrived together.

"Hi, April!" Claudia and I exclaimed at once.

"Hi," said April.

"April and I got to the house at the same time, so it was a perfect timing," said Mary Anne.

"I'm very excited to be here for the weekend," said April.

"My mom was glad about that because it's hard to do reports and sit for my younger stepsiblings at the same time," I said.

"That's true," agreed April.

"I am, too," said Claudia.

Mary Anne also introduced April to Stacey, Mallory, and Jessi since none of them met April yet.

"You get to go to Kristy's with me tomorrow because she has to do a book report and we're going to keep an eye on her stepsiblings from three to five," said Mary Anne.

"Okay, fine with me," said April.

Later, I was with the girls for an hour before Charlie came for me. The next day, at two, I was in the living room doing the book report. I read *Catcher of the Eye* and was doing the essay about it. It's about two pages long along with the review. Then, Karen, who arrived with Andrew, came in to turn the TV on.

"If you want to watch TV in here, you better lower it because I'm doing a book report right now," I said.

"But you can't, you have to watch me and Andrew," said Karen.

"Karen, it's due on Monday. Mom already knows about that. Mary Anne's coming to take over for me along with an old friend," I said.

At two-thirty, the doorbell rang and Mom answered the door.

"Hi, Mary Anne, come on in," said Mom.

"Thanks," said Mary Anne as she and April came in.

"Hi, April, I haven't seen you in ages," said Mom.

"I know. I'm here visiting Mary Anne for the weekend," said April.

"If you two want, you can take Karen and Andrew out somewhere so Kristy can do her book report," said Mom.

"Good idea," said Mary Anne.

That's what they did after Mom and Watson left and I was able to get it done in no time. I was already finished when they came back an hour later. Nannie, who was out with Emily Michelle, came home, too.

"You girls can go have fun out, I'll take over now," said Nannie.

"Okay. Thanks, Nannie," I said.

We did. We had some ice cream at a snack bar. We all had vanilla.

"Thanks for taking over for me, so this can be a thank you gift," I said.

"That was thoughtful of you," said April. "It is my pleasure to come with Mary Anne."

"I totally agree with you," said Mary Anne.

We laughed. We even went to the mall for awhile until we had to go home.

"I would spend every other weekend here to spend loads of time with Mary Anne," said April.

"Yea, that would be fun as long as it's okay with my dad and your mom," said Mary Anne on our way home.

"I was planning to tell my mom anyway," said April as we giggled.

Later, at Mary Anne's, they went to Mr. Spier and told him our idea.

"Of course you can so you can catch up," said Mr. Spier.

"Sweet," said Mary Anne and April.

April called her mom and she loved that idea, too.

"Guess what? Mom liked the idea," said April.

"Even more awesome," said Mary Anne excitedly.

10 - Dawn II

I couldn't believe I learned April had permission to be here every other weekend after they talked to Richard who liked the idea.

"She's also welcome to go on trips with us," said Richard.

"Every trip?" asked Mary Anne who was getting excited.

"Really?" asked April.

"Yes," smiled Richard.

"Swell!" exclaimed April in her excited tone.

"Thanks, Dad," said Mary Anne as they hugged him.

"Does any of you two want to go to Friendly's for dinner and ice cream?" asked my stepfather.

"Count us in," said Mary Anne.

"We'll leave in a bit," said Richard.

"Sounds good," said April as her friend agreed.

They left five minutes later. Mom was working late until eight or eight-thirty. I'll probably have peanut butter and tofu sandwich for dinner.

While April, Mary Anne, and Richard were at Friendly's, Mary Anne saw Cokie on the other side while they were waiting for their meals.

"Who is she with?" asked April.

That was when Mary Anne noticed Cokie was with Logan and they were kissing on the lips.

"Wait until I go after him. I'm not going to let that spoil our meals," said Mary Anne.

"I don't blame you," said April.

After dinner and had ice cream, they came home. Then, Mary Anne noticed Logan walking by with Cokie and went out.

"Excuse me, Cokie, but that's my boyfriend you're with," said Mary Anne. "I saw you both kissing at Friendly's."

"You poor...," started Cokie.

"Don't start," interrupted Mary Anne. "You know both Mr. and Mrs. Bruno don't allow you at that house."

"He wants to have an active girlfriend," said Cokie.

"I do," added Logan.

"Oh, really? Well, then, Logan and I are over until further notice," said Mary Anne as she came back inside.

"He agreed with Cokie that he wants to an active girlfriend?" asked April whose mouth has dropped open.

"That's what gets me mad. He'd say it to get her out of his hair. Like I mentioned before, he tells her or Marci at the last minute that he has me," said Mary Anne who was pretty angry.

"Honestly, boys are so immature," said April.

"Tell me about it," agreed my sister.

"At least you seemed to forget about it earlier," said April.

"True," said Mary Anne.

At nine, I came in Mary Anne's room.

"May I borrow Mary Anne, April? I have to tell her something," I said.

"Okay. I have to go brush my teeth," said April as she leaves the room to do so.

"Are you here in to apologize the way you acted since I had the role of Annie?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes, I'm sorry. I guess I was jealous since I had the understudy for an older orphan," I replied.

"And you did realize I was worried about you. I've been very excited since I got the part and I'm enjoying it. I like telling people when I'm excited. They like to hear about it," said Mary Anne.

"You're right. Will you forgive me?" I asked.

"Only if you promise not to do it again," said my sister.

"Promise," I said as she smiled and we hugged.

The next day, we got up fifteen minutes before ten.

"Have you heard of any William Shakespeare's books or his movies?" I asked.

"Not me," replied Mary Anne.

"I do, my favorite is Romeo and Juliet. They recently had it as a play at school and I played Juliet," added April.

"Did you had fun?" asked Mary Anne.

"I sure did. I even played Belle in Beauty and the Beast," said April.

"Boy, you've been a star in every play," said Mary Anne.

"You bet," smiled April as they giggled.

"I borrowed both Romeo and Juliet & MacBeth books from the library," I said.

"Forget MacBeth. I rented it and I hated that movie," said April.

That afternoon, she took the four o'clock flight. On the way, we rented both MacBeth and Romeo & Juliet.

"We can watch them later tonight after dinner," said Richard.

"Okay. Sounds good," I said.

That night, at dinner, Mary Anne had just finished her meal. She was quiet for the whole time.

"Do you want any homemade apple pie?" asked Mom.

"No thanks. Dad, may I leave the table?" asked my sister.

"Certainly," replied Richard.

She got up and headed up to her room.

"Is she still heartbroken about Logan?" asked Mom.

"Probably," replied my stepfather.

After dinner, I cleaned the kitchen on my own.

"How come Mary Anne isn't down here to help out?" asked Mom.

"She's too upset right now," said Richard.

"She still needs to help out," said Mom.

"Give her more time," said Richard.

"I don't mind doing the kitchen on my own," I added.

Mary Anne seemed to forget about Logan by watching one of the two Shakespeare's movies, Romeo and Juliet. She liked that movie. After that movie, I rewinded it before I put MacBeth in. But when Mary Anne saw MacBeth killing people-especially King Deacon so MacBeth can be the king, she freaked out. Even the blood freaked her out. In every movie, she would cry, but not this one.

"Do I have to see the rest of the movie?" asked Mary Anne.

"You don't have to if it's scaring you, honey," replied my stepfather.

That was when she took off to her room.

"She should know it's only a movie, not real, it's all make believe," I said.

"But it was scaring her," said Richard. "She doesn't have to watch the rest of the movie if she doesn't want to."

"And I bet she'd prefer Romeo and Juliet," added Mom.

"I should go see how Mary Anne is," said Richard.

"I would," said Mom. "Dawn and I can finish the movie."

In Mary Anne's room, Richard came in to see my sister.

"Are you okay now?" asked Richard.

"I'm just trying to forget about MacBeth," said Mary Anne who was shaking.

"It'll be okay," said Richard comforting her. "I'm sure you will. The rehearsals for Annie would help you to forget about MacBeth."

When we went to bed at ten, it took almost a long time for Mary Anne to fall asleep.

11 - Mary Anne IV

I don't know what time I finally fell asleep because a few hours later, I was tossing and turning in bed when the dream started up.

I was twelve and I was on a ferry boat with Mom, who had just come back to life, to get know her better. Two to three hours later, when I turned, I noticed she was gone.

"Mama?" I asked.

Then someone called out, "Someone's cut in half in the snack section!"

When I went there, it was Mom.

"Mama!" I called out.

I saw a shadow and when I turned, it was MacBeth. I screamed as the dream ended.

"No!" I shouted as I sat up in bed.

That was when Dad came in and said, "It's okay, honey, you had a bad dream. Was it from MacBeth?"

I nodded while I was crying and hugging him.

"It'll be alright," said Dad while he was stroking my hair,

"I'm going to excuse myself the next time you guys watch MacBeth so I can get rid of him," I said.

"I don't blame you," said Dad.

The next day, we were getting ready to do scenes one and two.

"Take your places, everyone!" announced the director.

"Mama! Mama! Mommy!" called Mallory from the script.

"Shut up," said Marci.

"Can't anyone get any sleep around here?" asked Cokie.

"Mama! Mommy!" continued Mallory.

"I said shut your trap, Molly," said Marci pushing Mal aside.

"Don't push that poor kid. She did nothing to you," said Claudia.

"She's keeping me awake, ain't she?" asked Marci.

"No, you're keeping us awake," said Claudia.

"Wanna make something out of it?" asked Marci.

They started fighting.

"Oh, my goodness. They're fighting," said Jessi.

I came from the curtain.

"Pipe down! All of you! Go back to sleep!" I called to them as I went to Mallory. "It's alright, Molly, Annie's here."

"It was my mama, Annie. We were riding on the ferry boat. She was holding me up to see all the big ships. And then, she just walked away and I couldn't find her no more. Anywhere," said Mallory.

"It was only a dream, honey. You have to get back to sleep now. It's after three o'clock in the morning," I said.

"Annie, read me your note," said Mallory.

"My note? Again?" I asked.

"Please?" asked Mallory.

"Sure, Molly," I replied as I took it out.

"Here it comes again. Ahh," said Marci.

"Please take good care of our little darling. Her name is Annie. She was born on....," I started.

"She was born on October 28. We'll be back to get her soon," interrupted Cokie.

"We have left a half-silver locket around her neck and kept the other half," Marci joined in.

"So, that when we come back for her, you will know she's our baby," said the rest except Mallory, Claud, and Jessi.

They were laughing.

"And now they're laughing," said Jessi.

I folded my fold as I got up to Marci.

"Alright. Do you want to sleep with your teeth inside your mouth or out?" I asked angrily as I went back to sit with Mallory.

"Gee, Annie, you're lucky. I wish I'd have my parents again, but you really got them," said Mallory.

"I know. Somewhere," I said as the song started. "Maybe far away or maybe real nearby. He may be pouring her coffee. She may be straightening his tie. Maybe in a house, all hidden by a hill. She's sitting playing piano. He's sitting paying a bill. Betcha they're young, betcha they're smart. Bet they collect things like ashtrays and art. Betcha they're good. Why shouldn't they be? Their one mistake was giving up me. So, maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe."

The song continued as I pretended to put Mallory to bed and sat on her side of the bed.

"Betcha he reads, betcha she sews. Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes. Maybe they're strict as straight as a line. Don't really care as long as they're mine. So, maybe now this prayer's the last one of its kind. Won't you please come get your baby?" I sang as she laid in bed. "Maybe."

I pretended to hear the clock chimed for four am. I got up, looks out the window, and went to under the bed to pack a bag.

"Now what?" asked Marci.

"Annie, what are you doing?" asked Kristy.

"I'm running away," I replied.

"Oh, my goodness," said Jessi.

"My parents aren't coming back for me, so I'm going to find them," I said.

"Annie, you're nuts. Miss Hannigan will catch you," warned Claudia.

"And hit you with the paddle," added Jessi.

"I don't care. I'm getting out of here. Okay, I'm ready. Wish me luck," I said.

"Good luck, Annie," said the others.

"Good luck, Dumbbell," said Marci.

I was pretending to head out when Mrs. Boyd came.

"Ahh. I caught you! I hear you. I always hear you. Bend over," said Mrs. Boyd as I stood still. "I said bend over."

I did as Mrs. Boyd pretended to hit me with the paddle.

"Now what do you say?" asked Mrs. Boyd as I remained silent. "What...you...do...say?"

"I love you, Miss Hannigan," I replied.

"Rotten orphan," said Mrs. Boyd.

"I'm not an orphan. My folks left me with a note saying they love me and they'd come back for me," I said.

"That was 1922. This is 1933. Get up, everyone!" said Mrs. Boyd. "Annie was trying to escape again. You're all going to strip the beds for the laundry man."

"But it's four o'clock in the morning," said Jessi.

"Oh, I know. Then you'll get down on your knees and clean this dump until it shines like the top of the Chrysler Building," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Yes, Miss Hannigan," said the rest of us.

"Get to work. Now," said Mrs. Boyd. "Why a kid wants to be an orphan? I'll never know."

The song started as we started cleaning.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us," we sang.

"Instead of treated," I sang.

"We get tricked," we sang.

"Instead of kisses," I sang.

"We get kicked. It's the hard-knock life," we sang. "We got no folks to speak of, so it's the hard-knock role we hoe."

"Cotton blankets," I sang.

"Instead of wool," we sang.

"Empty bellies," I sang.

"Instead of full, it's the hard-knock life," we sang.

"Don't it feel like the wind is always howling?" I sang.

"Don't it seem there's never any light?" sang Claudia and Kristy.

"Once a day, don't you wanna throw the towel in?" sang Mallory and Jessi.

"It's easier than putting up a fight," sang Marci and Cokie.

"No one's there when your dreams at night get creepy, no one cares if you grow or if you shrink, no one dries your eyes when they get weepy," I sang.

"From the crying you think this place's sink. Oh!" we sang. "Empty-bellies life, rotten-smelly life, full-of-sorrow life, no-tomorrow life."

"Santa Claus we never see," sang Mallory.

"Santa Claus, what's that? Who's he?" I sang.

"No one cares for you a smidge when you're in the orphanage," we sang.

"You'll stay up till this dump shines like the top of the Chrysler Building," said Mallory pretending to be Miss Hannigan.

"Yank the whiskers from her chin. Jab her with a safety pin. Make her drink a mickey finn," we sang. "I love you, Miss Hannigan."

"Get to work now! Strip the beds! I said get to work!" said Mallory.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us. No one cares for you a smidge when you're in an orphanage. It's the hard-knock life, it's the hard-knock life, it's...the...hard-knock...life!" we sang as the song ended.

Then, Mrs. Boyd came and blew the whistle.

"Good morning, children," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Good morning, Miss Hannigan," we said.

"Well?" asked Mrs. Boyd.

"We love you, Miss Hannigan," we said.

"We love you, Miss Hannigan," said Mallory from the laundry basket.

Mrs. Boyd went there and said, "What are you doing in there?"

"Nothing," said Mallory.

"Get her out of there. Your days are numbered," said Mrs. Boyd. "Alright, breakfast."

"Hot mush," we choired.

"No, we're not having any hot mush this morning," said Mrs. Boyd as we cheered. "We're having cold mush. Then, you'll be on sewing machines until midnight."

"Yes, Miss Hannigan," we choired.

Mr. Lohan as Mr. Bundles arrives and said, "Laundry man. Good morning, kids."

"Morning, Mr. Bundles," we said.

"I got clean sheets every month," said Mr. Lohan.

"Thank you, Mr. Bundles," we said.

We got them. While Mr. Lohan was chatting with Mrs. Boyd, I climbed into the laundry basket lying in it while the girls covered me. They finished in time and Mr. Lohan left.

"You call this clean, Annie? This is still messy," said Mrs. Boyd with no respond. "Annie? Annie?"

"Annie ain't here," the orphans choired.

"What do you mean Annie ain't here?" asked Mrs. Boyd.

"She just left with Mr. Bundles," said Kristy.

"In the laundry basket," added Marci.

"Mr. Bundles! Help, police!" exclaimed Mrs. Boyd leaving the stage.

They did the reprise of It's The Hard-Knock Life.

"Very good, everyone, take a break then, we'll do the Tomorrow scene," said Mr. Jackson.

We took a short break and it was time for me, Rocky, and Mr. Lins to get ready. Then, I started walking.

"Apples for sell. Apples for sell," said Mrs. Young. "Do you want one, young lady?"

"Yes, please. Thank you, ma'am," I replied as I sat down.

"Have you seen a stray around here?" asked Mr. Gomes as the dogcatcher.

"No, sir," I answered as he left.

Then, I spotted a dog.

"Hey, here's one they didn't get. Come here, boy," I said as he came to her to lay next to her. "Aww, did they hurt you? They're after you, ain't they? They're after me, too. But don't worry I won't let them get me

or you. Everything will be fine for the both of us. If not today, well."

The song started.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," I sang as the song paused.

"Hey, you! Little girl. Come here," said Mr. Lins.

I went to him and said, "Yes, officer?"

"That dog there. Haven't I seen him around here before? Isn't he a stray?" asked Mr. Lins.

"A stray? Oh, no, officer. He's my dog," I replied.

"Your dog, huh? So, what's his name?" asked Mr. Lins.

"His name? Oh, his name is, um, Sandy. Yes, that's right, Sandy. I call him Sandy because see, his fur is a nice, sandy color," I replied.

"Sandy color, alright. Let's see if Sandy answers his name," said Mr. Lins.

"Answer? You mean when I call him?" I asked.

"Right. When you call him by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him," I said.

"Call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay," I said as I walked away to the center stage and kneeled down. "Sandy. Here, Sandy. Here, boy."

Rocky went to her.

"Good, Sandy. Good old Sandy," I said Mary Anne.

"Maybe he is your dog. But the next time you take him out, I want to see him with the leash and the license otherwise he goes to the pound and they'll put him to sleep. Do you understand?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir, I understand with the leash and license," I said.

"Now get on before you catch a cold in this weather," said Mr. Lins.

"Oh, I don't mind the weather," I said as the song started up. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended.

"Good, we can take a break. Then, we can do it again from the top," announced Mr. Jackson.

We did and the rehearsal went perfectly again.

"See you Wednesday," said Mr. Jackson.

12 - Claudia III

At the meeting, I was passing out the crackers for both Dawn and Stacey. I even passed out M&Ms to the others-except Mary Anne who turned it down, which was unusual.

"I'm all set, Claudia. Thanks anyway," said Mary Anne.

"Are you alright, Mary Anne? You never say no to candy," I said getting concerned about her.

"My stomach is starting to hurt a bit, that's all," replied Mary Anne.

"Would you like some crackers to make your stomach feel better?" I asked.

"Thanks, but all I want is water for now," answered Mary Anne.

"Okay, go ahead," I said.

That's what she did. But for reason, she didn't return.

"Maybe I should go see if Mary Anne's okay," said Dawn who was getting worried about her sister.

"I would," agreed Kristy who was getting worried about Mary Anne.

When Dawn was about to get up when my older sister, Janine, knocked on the door.

"Is Mary Anne okay? She looked pale and she just passed out," said Janine.

"Uh-oh. I better go call Richard," said Dawn as she rushed to go do that.

"Where is she?" asked Kristy.

"I just put her on Mom and Dad's bed," replied my sister.

"Okay," I said. "I'll go stay with her until Mr. Spier comes."

"That'd be a good idea," agreed Stacey.

That's what I did when Dawn met me and said, "Richard's on his way now."

"You wait for your stepfather and I'll stay with Mary Anne until he arrives," I told her. "When he gets here, tell him she's in my parents' room."

"Okay," said Dawn.

Five minutes later, Mr. Spier arrived and came up with Dawn after I took Mary Anne's temperature.

"She's burning up," I said. "The temperature was 101 degrees Fahrenheit."

"I'll bring her home now before she gets too dizzy afterwards," said Mr. Spier.

"Good idea," agreed his stepdaughter.

He left to bring Mary Anne home with him.

"Poor Mary Anne might get confused where she is when she wakes up later on," said Dawn as she and I came back to join the rest.

"I agree," I said.

After the meeting, we all decided to see Mary Anne before we went to have dinner at Stoneybrook Diner.

"How's Mary Anne doing? Did she wake up?" asked Dawn.

"No, not yet," replied Mr. Spier.

That was when Sharon came down and said, "Mary Anne just woke up."

"I'll go see how she is," said Mr. Spier going up to his daughter. "Are you going to be okay now, honey?"

"Dad, what happen?" asked Mary Anne who was a bit puzzled.

"You passed out. You were burning up," said Mr. Spier.

Her temperature remained at 101 degrees Fahrenheit. The next day, Mary Anne was out because her fever didn't go away yet. We were talking about having a slumber party at Kristy's on Friday after the meeting and then another one at Mary Anne and Dawn's Saturday night.

"I'll ask Richard if Mary Anne and I can have both sleepovers," said Dawn.

"Sounds good," said Kristy.

I did my English homework on questions during study hall. I was done by the time the bell rang. After school, at home, I was doing math and science homework. I did science questions first. Math was on order of operations, which confuses me. The best way to remember is PEMDAS- Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally. I try to remember that. Luckily, I called Stacey to help me out since she's the math whiz.

"Of course. I'll be right over," said Stacey

She did arrive two minutes later and helped me out. We were done in no time.

"Either you or Janine can help me study when the test date is announced," I said.

"Good idea," agreed Stacey.

She stayed for an hour and left for a sitting job. I decided to call Mary Anne to see how she was feeling. Dawn answered.

"Hello," said Dawn.

"Hi, Dawn, is Mary Anne asleep?" I asked.

"She's just relaxing on the couch," replied Dawn.

"May I talk to her? I just want to see how she was doing this afternoon," I said.

"Of course. I'll give her to the portable phone," said Dawn.

She did and Mary Anne came on the phone.

"Hi, Claudia, what's up?" asked Mary Anne.

"How are you doing?" I asked her.

"I'm feeling a bit better. Thank goodness the rehearsal was yesterday. I hope I'll get better tomorrow for it," replied Mary Anne as I agreed with her.

The next day, Mary Anne did get better and was back at school. She was happy about that-especially in time for practice. All she had for lunch was tuna and water.

"My stomach's still not feeling well. I didn't eat anything because I was afraid it would come back up," said Mary Anne. "In fact, I threw up three times until two or two-thirty. I'm so glad that I'm better."

After school, at the rehearsal, we did scenes three for *We Would Like to Thank You* and Mrs. Boyd would do scene four for *Little Girls*. I like the part when the orphans tease her. Then Mr. Lins would return Mary Anne and Mrs. Bleacher, who's playing Grace, would get Annie to invite her to spend Christmas at Mr. Warbucks' home.

After we did both scenes, Cokie said, "How come Mary Anne gets to do her lines without scripts?"

"How about you should mind your business? I'm sure she practiced at home first. She does have the script in case she wants to study it before the rehearsal," said Kristy. "That's why she's been memorizing her lines."

"Yeah," I agreed.

"The only scene I'm nervous about is scene seven when Annie cried when Mr. Warbucks gives her the new locket, but didn't want it because the old one she's been wearing was from her parents when they left her. That'd be the tough part," said Mary Anne who was starting to feel anxious about it.

"Don't worry, it's not until Monday since we'll be doing scene five for I Think I'm Gonna Like it Here and scene six for NYC on Friday," said Kristy.

"True," agreed Mary Anne.

"We're doing the entire Act one on Wednesday since scene seven is the last one for You Won't be An Orphan for Long," I added.

"And the end verse of Maybe," Mary Anne added on.

13 - Kristy III

On Friday, we were ready for scene five for I Think I'm Gonna Like it Here and NYC & scene six for Easy Street. After the rehearsal, we were at the Claud's house for the meeting.

"I can't wait for tonight after the meeting and tomorrow," I said excitedly.

"Me either," said Mary Anne who was excited, too.

"You've been doing excellent at memorizing your lines so far," commented Claudia.

"I know, the only scene I'm a bit nervous about is scene seven Monday," said Mary Anne.

"You'll do just fine, you'll see," said Stacey as the rest of us agreed.

"What was your favorite scene so far this week?" asked Claudia.

"I'm not sure. I like all of them," replied our secretary as we all laughed.

"I just got MacBeth yesterday as my own, so we can watch it tonight after dinner," said Dawn.

"Count me out on that, when I first saw it, I've been having bad dreams about it," Mary Anne told her.

After the meeting, we were at my house for the slumber party. After dinner, Mary Anne did end up passing from MacBeth like she planned. She just wants to keep avoiding it in order to forget about him.

In the middle of the night, Mary Anne still had trouble to get rid of MacBeth, but woke up once from a bad dream about it. She even said he's been involved by killing her mother. I felt bad for her.

The next day, the girls were going to be picked up by one. I was going to be picked up with Mary Anne and Dawn. The others will be at the house later on tonight at about six or six-thirty. Dawn has to baby-sit for the Barretts and would be back later this afternoon. At their house, Mary Anne and I were watching the play version of Annie again.

Mr. Spier came in to us and said, "Sharon and I will be at Stamford Club tonight from six-thirty to eleven-thirty. Will you girls be alright to be on your own?"

"We'll be okay, Dad," said Mary Anne.

"You may order either pizza or Chinese for dinner. I'll leave forty or sixty bucks," continued Mr. Spier.

"Okay, sounds good," said Mary Anne.

"If you girls and Carlos want to leave the house to have dinner instead and hang-out, you can. Just be

home before eleven," said her father.

"No problem," said Mary Anne.

"We'll just let the rest know when they come later on tonight," I added.

That night, the girls came a bit early at around five thirty. Mary Anne told them what was going on.

"Okay," said Stacey agreeing to the idea.

"When's Dawn coming back home?" asked Jessi.

"She should be back shortly," I replied.

"Sharon and I will be leaving at six," said Mr. Spier coming in the living room.

"Okay, I already told the girls what was going on," said Mary Anne.

We all decided to sleep in the basement where we always sleep when we have sleep overs there if it's warm enough. Dawn came home fifteen minutes later and Mary Anne told her sister about the plan about their parents and about what Mr. Spier mentioned earlier. Only Carlos couldn't stay. He was already invited for a sleepover at a friend's house.

"Sounds good," said Dawn who liked the idea.

At six, Mr. Spier and Sharon left for Stamford Club.

"We can go hang-out at the mall and have dinner there," said Mary Anne. "Dad left us sixty bucks."

"Okay," said Stacey.

That was when the doorbell rang as Mary Anne went to answer. It was Cokie and her sidekicks, Grace and Bebe.

"Uh-oh! Cokie, what are you doing here?" asked Claudia.

"Grace, Bebe, and I decided to challenge you on a treasure hunt," said Cokie.

We looked at each other and nodded.

"We could do that, too, since my stepfather said we can hang-out," said Dawn.

"What do you have in mind?" asked Mary Anne.

"We have a copy of the list," said Cokie giving it to Mary Anne.

The list was made like this:

1) Get a drink with a date at Stamford Club

2) Tell Mr. Spier he's an awful lawyer

3) Get Logan's boxers

4) Find a Cam Geary's movie

"What!" exclaimed Mary Anne in a shocked tone. "Tell my dad he's a bad lawyer? No way I'm telling him that! You're crazy. His feelings are going to get hurt! Plus, we're much too young to get into Stamford Club. We could get caught. It's for teens 16 and up, not thirteen! Third of all, I don't want Logan to get mad at us if we get his boxers."

"Yeah," agreed Stacey.

"So, either change the first three of them or we're not doing this," warned Mary Anne in her firm voice.

"You tell her, Mary Anne," I agreed as well.

That made Cokie listen.

"One more thing; we need to be home by eleven," Mary Anne told Cokie.

"Why?" asked Cokie.

"My dad said so and that's his rule, not mine," answered Mary Anne.

"Here's the fresh list," said Grace.

The first item would be finding dress in any color. The second item was find something red and write a love note for Logan as a secret admirer and put it in his mailbox.

"That's more like it, " said Mary Anne.

"Mallory and Jessi can come with us. We'll bring back dinner for all of us," I said. "Mary Anne, do you have your watch on?"

"Check," replied the secretary showing it to me.

"That way we'll know when it's almost eleven," I said.

"I know," agreed Mary Anne.

"We can make it interesting," said Dawn.

"Okay, try me," said Cokie.

"If you lose, you'll have to sit with the immature boys," said Dawn.

"If we win, you'll do the same," said Cokie.

"Deal," said Dawn.

At Fashion Bug, we found a blue dress and paid for it. Then, I found a red apple and took a picture of it.

"What time is it now?" I asked Mary Anne.

"It's barely eight," replied Mary Anne.

"What should we write to Logan?" I asked.

Mary Anne took the note out.

"You already wrote that?" I asked surprised.

Mary Anne nodded as she read it to me and said, "Since Cokie wants us to be a secret admirer, I put your favorite lover."

"Good idea," I agreed.

She took a picture of that and we put it in the mailbox.

"I know where we can get a Cam Geary movie. Let's go," said Mary Anne.

We joined the rest and headed to the mall and went to FYE where we found Cam Geary in Octopusman vs. Tigerman.

"I don't have this one," said Mary Anne who collects his movies.

We paid and decided to bring home Subway.

Back at home, Cokie was already there.

"Do you know where to find a Cam Geary movie?" asked Cokie.

"Sorry to break it to you, but you lose," replied Mary Anne showing it to her.

"What!" exclaimed Cokie in a shocked voice.

"Better luck next time. So, you get to have the immature boys like you all three agreed," I said.

"Wait until I win the bet," said Cokie.

"Nice try," said Mary Anne. "We heard the immature boys put gum under the tables."

"And do annoying things," continued Stacey.

The sidekicks left disappointed.

"Did you see their faces?" asked Claudia.

We all laughed. We got undressed to get comfy. We decided to watch Octopusman vs. Tigerman while we have Subway.

"We're home just in time because it's after nine," announced Mary Anne as the rest of us agreed.

The movie was done at eleven-fifteen when Mr. Spier and Sharon came home. We were still in the living room.

"Hi, Mom, did you guys had fun at the club?" asked Dawn.

"We had a fun time. We left there early," replied Sharon.

"That's good," replied Mary Anne.

"We had a blast as well," said Dawn.

She and Mary Anne told them everything especially the bet.

"So now, they have to sit with the immature boys at school," added Mary Anne.

"You both should've seen their faces," continued Stacey.

We all laughed. We went downstairs in the basement to get ready for bed. We didn't fell asleep until about thirty minutes later.

14 - Mary Anne V

I thought MacBeth would be gone by now, but noo because I woke up from that bad dream the next morning at eight about us being killed during a rehearsal. I got up and went upstairs.

"You're up early, it's after eight," said Dad.

"I just had a bad about MacBeth, that's all," I said. "I thought he would be gone by now."

"I know," said Dad.

When the rest left by ten, I went to lie down to relax. I must have fallen asleep by eleven-thirty because Dad noticed that when he came in the living room as he covered me.

"It's time for lunch," said Dawn.

"Shh, Mary Anne's asleep," whispered Dad. "She might not want anything right now."

"It's after eleven-thirty," said Dawn.

"She was tired this morning, let her sleep," said Dad.

Later, I was still sleeping at three.

"She's still sleeping at three?" asked Dawn.

"Why can't you just whisper for once?" asked Dad. "I told you she's tired."

I didn't even get up until around dinnertime.

"Hi, feeling better after you slept for the day?" asked Dad.

"A little bit," I replied.

"Do you want anything for dinner?" asked Dad.

"No thanks, I'm still tired," I answered. "I might go to bed early."

"Okay," said Dad.

"Do you mind if I excuse myself from helping Dawn out from the kitchen?" I asked since Carlos was at a basketball practice.

"I don't mind," said Dad.

"What?" asked Dawn.

"She's still too tired to do anything," said Dad.

"I thought you don't mind doing the kitchen on your own," I said.

"She got you there," said Sharon.

I took a shower and went to bed at nine. Luckily, I finally managed to get rid of MacBeth. Why? I figured I'd try to forget about him. The next day, I felt much better. At school, in Gym, I was running around when I started to feel pins and needles in my leg, so I was able to sit out for awhile. Unfortunately, it didn't get better until after Gym ended,

After school, I was STILL about scene seven, but I knew I'd do just fine.

"Get ready," said Mr. Jackson.

I was behind the curtains outside the near the doors when Mrs. Bleechers goes to Mr. Lins to give him the imaginary package from Tiffany and Co.

"Oh, thank you. Where's Annie?" asked Mr. Lins.

"She's writing to her friends," replied Mrs. Bleechers.

"Have Drake get Annie," said Mr. Lins.

"Drake, tell Annie Mr. Warbucks wants to see her," said Mrs. Bleechers.

I came in to Mr. Lins two seconds later.

"Hello, Annie, how are you today?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Very well. Thanks," I said.

"I'll leave you both alone," said Mrs. Bleechers.

"Mind if we have a talk?" asked Mr. Lins.

"You're not sending me back to the orphanage, are you?" I asked.

"Of course not. I became an orphan as a child myself. I was about your age when my parents died. So, from that day on, I became very rich," said Mr. Lins.

"Good idea," I commented.

"What's the life without you when you don't have someone to share with? Do you get what I'm saying?"

asked Mr. Lins.

"Sure. Kind of. Not really," I replied.

"Well, maybe this would explain it better," said Mr. Lins pretending to give me the jewelry box.

When I opened it, it was a new locket.

"Oh, gee. Thank you," I said.

"I noticed you've been wearing the old one, so I decided to give you the new...," said Mr. Lins trying to take it off.

"No! I don't want a new one," I said getting away.

"Annie, what is it?" asked Mr. Lins.

"When my folks left at the orphanage, they left me with this half-locket along with a note saying they'd come back for me one day. Mr. Warbucks, I love being here, but all I want is to find my parents," I said running to Mrs. Bleachers sobbing.

"I'll help you find them. All I need is your locket and the note so the FBI to trace it to your parents," said Mr. Lins.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yes," smiled Mr. Lins.

I took off the locket and takes out the note to give them to Mr. Lins.

"Thank you," I said.

They sang You Won't Be An Orphan For Long.

"May I go finish writing to my friends to tell them?" I asked.

"Sure," said Mr. Lins.

I took off to finish the letter while the reprise of Maybe started.

"Maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe," I sang as the song ended.

During breaktime, I realized I wasn't nervous anymore. I heard the best way if you have to cry in a movie, play, or music video, you can think of something sad. That's usually a good trick to use. I don't have too many sad things except when the day Tigger had gone missing. That's all I could think of. Somehow, I did it again after the second time.

At the meeting, Stacey said, "I noticed you felt comfortable doing scene seven now."

"Yes, because I heard the best way if you have to cry in a movie, play, or music video, you can think of something sad," I said.

"That was a good idea," said Stacey.

That was when I felt pins and needles in my leg AGAIN.

"Are you okay?" asked Kristy.

"I got pins and needles in my leg again," I said.

"Do you use my pillow to rest it?" asked Claudia.

"Sure, thanks," I said as I did.

After the meeting, even though I still got pins and needles in my leg, I managed to walk home. At home, I was doing homework in a recliner resting my leg when Dad came home from work. I had just finished at the time.

"Hi," said Dad.

"Hi," I said putting my homework in my backpack. "I had pins and needles in my leg in Gym until after that period and the feeling came back during the meeting."

"Are you going to be alright now?" asked Dad.

"I'll be fine, I'm just resting my leg here," I replied.

Later, we left for dinner at the mall. We were at the food court eating when Cokie spotted me and came to me.

"What now?" I asked groaning.

"I bet you'd be too chicken to memorize your lines," said Cokie.

That does it. I stood up to her.

"You need to stop bugging me. I've been doing perfectly fine memorizing my lines. You need to keep your nose clean," I said.

That got her to leave.

"You told her off, good," said Dad.

"She's getting on my nerves," I said.

Later, at Borders, someone came to me and said, "Have you seen my dog?"

"No, sorry," I said.

"Can you help me?" asked a guy.

"I can't, I have to get home shortly," I said as he leaves.

I'm glad I said something. First of all, I don't know this person and second, I could in trouble if I take off with a stranger. After Dad was ready to leave, we had some ice cream and left for home after that.

15 - Stacey II

At home, I had peanut butter crackers for a snack while doing my homework. Then I took my injection and took a blood sugar test after that & it was normal. After that was done, I relaxed for a bit. I was reading in the den.

At the meeting, Mary Anne and Dawn arrived.

"Charlie's car had a flat tire bringing her here, so she's running a bit late," said Claudia.

It was five-twenty-five anyway. Kristy came five to ten minutes later. We were pretty busy with a few phone calls. Later, at home, Mom and I were preparing dinner when the doorbell rang. When I checked to see who it was, I noticed it was Mary Anne and I opened the door. She looked pretty upset.

"Mary Anne, this is a nice surprise. Is everything okay?" I asked.

"It's my father. He's in the hospital. He collapsed during a meeting and found out it was a heart attack," replied Mary Anne trying to hold back tears.

"Oh, Mary Anne, did that just happen?" I asked as she nodded.

"I just hope he'd be alright," said Mary Anne.

"I'm sure," I said. "Maybe the rehearsal would help you focus."

"I hope so," said Mary Anne while she was hugging me.

"Was it after the meeting?" I asked.

"Dawn and I had just got home back then," answered Mary Anne.

"Would you like to stay for dinner, dear?" asked Mom.

"I'm all set. I don't want anything right now," replied Mary Anne. "I'm just about to go visit Dad at the hospital."

"Want us to give you a ride?" asked Mom.

"Okay. Thanks," said Mary Anne trying to smile a bit.

"Should I stay behind to finish preparing so it won't get burnt?" I asked.

"Good idea," agreed Mom.

At the hospital, Mary Anne went to Sharon and went to hug her.

"How's Dad doing?" asked Mary Anne.

"He'll be fine. His heart is still acting up," replied Sharon.

"Tell him I hope he feels better. Mary Anne just told us about it," said Mom.

"I will. Thank you, Maureen," said Sharon.

"Thanks for giving a ride, Mrs. McGill," said Mary Anne.

"No problem. If you need anything, give me a call," said Mom as she left to go home.

At home, dinner was served when Mom returned.

"Dinner's ready," I said.

"Okay. Mr. Spier's heart was still acting up according to Sharon. I told her to call us if she needs anything," said Mom.

"Alright," I said.

After dinner, Mary Anne came over again. She was crying again and hugging me. Mr. Spier's heart acted up again and need an open heart surgery otherwise he could die. Poor Mary Anne is scared to lose her father and best friend. She was going to stay overnight.

Even though Mary Anne is scared about losing her father, she slept all night. The next day, I'm glad that Mary Anne seemed to forget about losing her dad and walked to school with me.

"I don't even want to mention about Dad's heart attack or losing him. I just want to forget about the entire thing," said Mary Anne.

"Would you like me to do so? I can wait until the practice first," I said.

"Okay. I guess," replied Mary Anne.

After school, at the rehearsal, we were getting ready to do entire Act 1.

"Get ready, everyone," announced Mr. Jackson.

"Mama! Mama! Mommy!" called Mallory out.

"Shut up," said Marci.

"Can't anyone get any sleep around here?" asked Cokie.

"Mama! Mommy!" continued Mallory.

"I said shut your trap, Molly," said Marci pushing Mal down.

"Don't push that poor kid. She did nothing to you," said Claudia.

"She's keeping me awake, ain't she?" asked Marci.

"No, you're keeping us awake," answered Claudia.

"Wanna make something out of it, July?" asked Marci.

They started fighting.

"Oh, my goodness. They're fighting," said Jessi.

Mary Anne came from the curtain.

"Pipe down! All of you! Get back to sleep!" said Mary Anne going to Mallory. "It's alright, Molly, Annie's here."

"It was my mama, Annie. We were riding on a ferry boat. She was holding me up to see the big ships. Then she left waving and I couldn't find her anymore," said Mallory.

"It's only a dream, honey, you have to get back to sleep now. It's after three o'clock," said Mary Anne.

"Annie, read me your note," said Mallory.

"My note? Again?" asked Mary Anne.

"Please?" asked Mallory.

"Sure, Molly," replied Mary Anne.

"Here it comes again. Ahh!" shouted Marci.

"Please take good care of our little darling. Her name is Annie. She was born..." Mary Anne began.

"She was born on October 28th. We'll be back to get her soon," said Cokie.

"We have left a half-silver locket around her neck and kept the other half," said Marci and Cokie.

"So, that when we come back for her, you'll know she's our baby," said the rest except for Mallory and Jessi.

They were all laughing.

"Oh, my goodness! Now they're laughing," said Jessi.

"Alright," said Mary Anne going to Marci angrily. "Do you wanna sleep with your teeth inside your mouth or out?"

She went back to Mallory.

"Gee, Annie, you're lucky. I wish I'd have my parents again, but you really got them," said Mallory.

"I know. Somewhere," said Mary Anne as the song began. "Maybe far away or maybe real nearby. He may be pouring her coffee. She may be straightening his tie. Maybe in a house, all hidden by a hill. She's sitting playing piano. He's sitting paying a bill. Betcha they're young, betcha they're smart. Bet they collect things like ashtrays and art. Betcha they're good. Why shouldn't they be? Their one mistake was giving up me. So, maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe."

The song continued was still playing while Mary Anne was putting Mallory where the bed would be and sat on the floor.

"Betcha he reads, betcha she sews. Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes. Maybe they're strict as straight as a line. Don't really care as long as they're mine. So, maybe now this prayer's the last one of its kind. Won't you please come get your baby? Maybe," sang Mary Anne as the song ended.

Then they did It's the Hard-Knock Life and then Mary Anne was outdoors.

"Apples for sell, apples for sell," said Mrs. Young. "Care to have one, miss?"

"Yes please. Thanks," said Mary Anne as she sat down.

"Have you seen a stray here?" asked Mr. Gomes.

"No, sir," replied Mary Anne as he left.

That was when she noticed a dog and said, "Hey, here's one they didn't get. Come here, boy."

He came to me and layed next to her.

"Aww, did they hurt you? They're after you, ain't they? They're after me, too. But don't worry I won't let them get me or you. Everything will be fine for the both of us. If not today, well," said Mary Anne as the song started. "The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne.

The song paused as Mr. Lins came by and said, "Hey, you! Little girl. Come here."

She went to him and said, "Yes, officer?"

"That dog there. Haven't I seen him around here before? Isn't he a stray?" asked Mr. Lins.

"A stray? Oh, no, officer. He's my dog," replied Mary Anne.

"Your dog, huh? So, what's his name?" asked Mr. Lins.

"His name? Oh, his name is, um, Sandy. Yes, that's right, Sandy. I call him Sandy because see, his fur is a nice, sandy color," said Mary Anne.

"Sandy color, alright. Let's see if Sandy answers his name," said Mr. Lins.

"Answer? You mean when I call him?" asked Mary Anne.

"Right. When you call him by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him," said Mary Anne.

"Call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay," she said as she walked away to the center stage and knelt down. "Sandy. Here, Sandy. Here, boy."

Rocky went to her.

"Good, Sandy. Good old Sandy," said Mary Anne.

"Maybe he is your dog. But the next time you take him out, I want to see him with the leash and the license otherwise he goes to the pound and they'll put him to sleep. Do you understand?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir, I understand with the leash and license," said Mary Anne.

"Now get on before you catch a cold in this weather," said Mr. Lins.

"Oh, I don't mind the weather," said Mary Anne as the song started up again. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended.

After the entire Act 1, Mary Anne was loved by everyone. To my surprise, Marci liked Mary Anne's acting and singing skills. Kathi was surprised, too. She and Patti are the only sidekicks that get along with Mary Anne, which is good. We walked to my house so she can get her stuff. Mom was waiting for us.

"Your dad had that heart surgery, so he's going to be fine," said Mom.

"Good," smiled Mary Anne.

"I'm going to bring you to the hospital so you can see him," continued Mom.

"Sounds good," said Mary Anne.

16 - Mary Anne VI

At home, I had peanut butter crackers for a snack while doing my homework. Then I took my injection and took a blood sugar test after that & it was normal. After that was done, I relaxed for a bit. I was reading in the den.

At the meeting, Mary Anne and Dawn arrived.

"Charlie's car had a flat tire bringing her here, so she's running a bit late," said Claudia.

It was five-twenty-five anyway. Kristy came five to ten minutes later. We were pretty busy with a few phone calls. Later, at home, Mom and I were preparing dinner when the doorbell rang. When I checked to see who it was, I noticed it was Mary Anne and I opened the door. She looked pretty upset.

"Mary Anne, this is a nice surprise. Is everything okay?" I asked.

"It's my father. He's in the hospital. He collapsed during a meeting and found out it was a heart attack," replied Mary Anne trying to hold back tears.

"Oh, Mary Anne, did that just happen?" I asked as she nodded.

"I just hope he'd be alright," said Mary Anne.

"I'm sure," I said. "Maybe the rehearsal would help you focus."

"I hope so," said Mary Anne while she was hugging me.

"Was it after the meeting?" I asked.

"Dawn and I had just got home back then," answered Mary Anne.

"Would you like to stay for dinner, dear?" asked Mom.

"I'm all set. I don't want anything right now," replied Mary Anne. "I'm just about to go visit Dad at the hospital."

"Want us to give you a ride?" asked Mom.

"Okay. Thanks," said Mary Anne trying to smile a bit.

"Should I stay behind to finish preparing so it won't get burnt?" I asked.

"Good idea," agreed Mom.

At the hospital, Mary Anne went to Sharon and went to hug her.

"How's Dad doing?" asked Mary Anne.

"He'll be fine. His heart is still acting up," replied Sharon.

"Tell him I hope he feels better. Mary Anne just told us about it," said Mom.

"I will. Thank you, Maureen," said Sharon.

"Thanks for giving a ride, Mrs. McGill," said Mary Anne.

"No problem. If you need anything, give me a call," said Mom as she left to go home.

At home, dinner was served when Mom returned.

"Dinner's ready," I said.

"Okay. Mr. Spier's heart was still acting up according to Sharon. I told her to call us if she needs anything," said Mom.

"Alright," I said.

After dinner, Mary Anne came over again. She was crying again and hugging me. Mr. Spier's heart acted up again and need an open heart surgery otherwise he could die. Poor Mary Anne is scared to lose her father and best friend. She was going to stay overnight.

Even though Mary Anne is scared about losing her father, she slept all night. The next day, I'm glad that Mary Anne seemed to forget about losing her dad and walked to school with me.

"I don't even want to mention about Dad's heart attack or losing him. I just want to forget about the entire thing," said Mary Anne.

"Would you like me to do so? I can wait until the practice first," I said.

"Okay. I guess," replied Mary Anne.

After school, at the rehearsal, we were getting ready to do entire Act 1.

"Get ready, everyone," announced Mr. Jackson.

"Mama! Mama! Mommy!" called Mallory out.

"Shut up," said Marci.

"Can't anyone get any sleep around here?" asked Cokie.

"Mama! Mommy!" continued Mallory.

"I said shut your trap, Molly," said Marci pushing Mal down.

"Don't push that poor kid. She did nothing to you," said Claudia.

"She's keeping me awake, ain't she?" asked Marci.

"No, you're keeping us awake," answered Claudia.

"Wanna make something out of it, July?" asked Marci.

They started fighting.

"Oh, my goodness. They're fighting," said Jessi.

Mary Anne came from the curtain.

"Pipe down! All of you! Get back to sleep!" said Mary Anne going to Mallory. "It's alright, Molly, Annie's here."

"It was my mama, Annie. We were riding on a ferry boat. She was holding me up to see the big ships. Then she left waving and I couldn't find her anymore," said Mallory.

"It's only a dream, honey, you have to get back to sleep now. It's after three o'clock," said Mary Anne.

"Annie, read me your note," said Mallory.

"My note? Again?" asked Mary Anne.

"Please?" asked Mallory.

"Sure, Molly," replied Mary Anne.

"Here it comes again. Ahh!" shouted Marci.

"Please take good care of our little darling. Her name is Annie. She was born...", Mary Anne began.

"She was born on October 28th. We'll be back to get her soon," said Cokie.

"We have left a half-silver locket around her neck and kept the other half," said Marci and Cokie.

"So, that when we come back for her, you'll know she's our baby," said the rest except for Mallory and Jessi.

They were all laughing.

"Oh, my goodness! Now they're laughing," said Jessi.

"Alright," said Mary Anne going to Marci angrily. "Do you wanna sleep with your teeth inside your mouth or out?"

She went back to Mallory.

"Gee, Annie, you're lucky. I wish I'd have my parents again, but you really got them," said Mallory.

"I know. Somewhere," said Mary Anne as the song began. "Maybe far away or maybe real nearby. He may be pouring her coffee. She may be straightening his tie. Maybe in a house, all hidden by a hill. She's sitting playing piano. He's sitting paying a bill. Betcha they're young, betcha they're smart. Bet they collect things like ashtrays and art. Betcha they're good. Why shouldn't they be? Their one mistake was giving up me. So, maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe."

The song continued was still playing while Mary Anne was putting Mallory where the bed would be and sat on the floor.

"Betcha he reads, betcha she sews. Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes. Maybe they're strict as straight as a line. Don't really care as long as they're mine. So, maybe now this prayer's the last one of its kind. Won't you please come get your baby? Maybe," sang Mary Anne as the song ended.

Then they did It's the Hard-Knock Life and then Mary Anne was outdoors.

"Apples for sell, apples for sell," said Mrs. Young. "Care to have one, miss?"

"Yes please. Thanks," said Mary Anne as she sat down.

"Have you seen a stray here?" asked Mr. Gomes.

"No, sir," replied Mary Anne as he left.

That was when she noticed a dog and said, "Hey, here's one they didn't get. Come here, boy."

He came to me and layed next to her.

"Aww, did they hurt you? They're after you, ain't they? They're after me, too. But don't worry I won't let them get me or you. Everything will be fine for the both of us. If not today, well," said Mary Anne as the song started. "The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne.

The song paused as Mr. Lins came by and said, "Hey, you! Little girl. Come here."

She went to him and said, "Yes, officer?"

"That dog there. Haven't I seen him around here before? Isn't he a stray?" asked Mr. Lins.

"A stray? Oh, no, officer. He's my dog," replied Mary Anne.

"Your dog, huh? So, what's his name?" asked Mr. Lins.

"His name? Oh, his name is, um, Sandy. Yes, that's right, Sandy. I call him Sandy because see, his fur is a nice, sandy color," said Mary Anne.

"Sandy color, alright. Let's see if Sandy answers his name," said Mr. Lins.

"Answer? You mean when I call him?" asked Mary Anne.

"Right. When you call him by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him," said Mary Anne.

"Call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay," she said as she walked away to the center stage and knelt down. "Sandy. Here, Sandy. Here, boy."

Rocky went to her.

"Good, Sandy. Good old Sandy," said Mary Anne.

"Maybe he is your dog. But the next time you take him out, I want to see him with the leash and the license otherwise he goes to the pound and they'll put him to sleep. Do you understand?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir, I understand with the leash and license," said Mary Anne.

"Now get on before you catch a cold in this weather," said Mr. Lins.

"Oh, I don't mind the weather," said Mary Anne as the song started up again. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended.

After the entire Act 1, Mary Anne was loved by everyone. To my surprise, Marci liked Mary Anne's acting and singing skills. Kathi was surprised, too. She and Patti are the only sidekicks that get along with Mary Anne, which is good. We walked to my house so she can get her stuff. Mom was waiting for us.

"Your dad had that heart surgery, so he's going to be fine," said Mom.

"Good," smiled Mary Anne.

"I'm going to bring you to the hospital so you can see him," continued Mom.

"Sounds good," said Mary Anne.

17 - Dawn III

Later, Mary Anne was in the backyard practicing her lines for scene two where she and Mr. Lins were visiting the White House singing Tomorrow with Mr. Lins, Mr. Tillis as Harold, Mr. Gomes as President Franklin Roosevelt, Mrs. Young as Ikes, and Mr. Brooks as Perkins. Then after that, she was practicing for scene three when she and Mr. Lins sing I Don't Need Anything But You for tomorrow's rehearsal. She had the script with her. I bet that's how she's memorizing her lines without using the scripts, but she would always bring it with her in case she wants to look over once more before each rehearsal.

That night, at dinner, I almost noticed Mary Anne wasn't at the table with us when I remembered she was baby-sitting for Kerry and Hunter. She came home a few hours later feeling a bit tired.

"You look pretty tired," I said.

"Just a tiny bit," replied Mary Anne. "I started to feel pins and needles in the same leg again and went away after an hour."

"That's good," I said.

"I know," said Mary Anne. "Kerry and Hunter pretended to be the doctors while I was their patient."

We laughed.

"That's cute," I said.

After Mary Anne spent some time with Richard, who was outside, we went to bed an hour later.

The next day, we started short takes and had health. Our teacher, Mr. Patrick Holmes, assigned us to do our reports based on any medical condition and gave us the list. It would be due next week. All of my four friends were with me. We even had Logan and Kathi as well. Mary Anne was glad that she has Kathi. We only don't have Patti; she has an art class. We talked about the report at lunch. Kathi was with Marci who also has an art class. Kayla and Kaylee were with Mary Anne, too.

"I'm going to do an essay on diabetes," said Stacey.

"I'm doing cancer of any type since both my mom and grandfather died from it," said Mary Anne.

Kristy had the list and said, "Pregnancy is the part of the medical condition, so I'll do that one."

"You can do asthma as well, which I'll be doing," said Logan who came to sit with Mary Anne.

"Good choice," commented his girlfriend.

"Stroke is a good choice for you, Claud," said Kristy.

"I already planned on that," said Claudia.

"I'll do an essay on COPD," said Kayla. "That's known for chronic bronchitis, emphysema, or both."

"I like that choice," said Mary Anne.

"Ane I'm doing natural causes," added Kaylee.

"I might do heart attack next time," said Mary Anne.

"Why not now?" asked Logan.

"It's her decision," replied Kristy. "She's already decided to do cancer."

"What about you, Dawn?" asked Stacey.

"I can do it on colds, it's on the list, too," I replied.

"That's true it is. We can look in the school library during study hall or something to see if it has any of the books on medical conditions of our choices," said Kristy.

"Sounds good," I agreed.

After lunch, Mr. Holmes said, "You can go to the library now and stay there as long as you like or until you check out the books about the medical stuff that you've been chosen."

In the library, we went over to the health section. Mary Anne came with Kathi who was planning on doing heart failure.

"Here's the book on colds," I said.

"Do you know colds can also be allergies as well?" asked Logan.

"Very interesting," said Pete Black.

"I knew that," I replied.

"Here's the book for all types of cancer, Mary Anne," said Kathi.

"Okay. Great," said Mary Anne. "My mother had leukemia and my Grandfather Bill had colon cancer according to my Grandmother Verna."

She found those pages that were in chapters.

"Perfect. The cancer types are in chapters," said Mary Anne.

Kathi found a book for heart failure also known as heart disease.

"I never knew heart failure is also known as heart disease," said Kathi.

"Me either," said Mary Anne.

Claudia had already found a stroke book and Logan got a book on asthma.

"Here's the pregnancy book," said Pete.

"Oh, thank you, Pete," said Kristy getting it.

"I found the book about diabetes," said Stacey.

Kayla found the book on COPD and Kayla found natural causes.

"We can always find research online if you need more information," said Mary Anne.

"That's true, but I think books should be good enough for now," I said.

Then we went to check out. Pete had the book on chicken pox.

"Chicken pox is on the list as well," said Pete.

"Good choice," said Stace.

"I agree," I said.

After school, at the rehearsal, Mr. Jackson said, "Get ready: Mary Anne, Mr. Lins, Mr. Gomes, Mrs. Young, Mr. Tillis, and Mr. Brooks."

It started when Mary Anne and Mr. Lins arrived at the White House. They were having a meeting about what they can do to help.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom that dollar there'll be sun," sang Mary Anne.

"Quiet, little girl," said Mr. Tillis.

"No, Harold. Go ahead, Annie, it's still a free country," said Mr. Gomes.

The song began as Mary Anne stood on the imaginary table.

"Just thinkin' about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne.

"Go ahead, Harold, sing," said Mr. Gomes.

"What?" asked Mr. Tillis.

"Sing," said Mr. Gomes.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom that dollar there'll be sun," sang Mr. Tillis.

"Ikes," said Mr. Gomes.

"Just thinkin' about tomorrow," sang Mrs. Young.

"Clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none," sang Mr. Tillis and Mrs. Young.

"The solo for the president," said Mr. Gomes. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say... everyone, you, too, Oliver, sing."

"The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day... away!" They all sang as the song ended.

"Oliver, you a telegram from Grace saying 800 couples are at the mansion and said to get back right away," said Mr. Gomes.

"Oh, goody," said Mary Anne.

"Let's go, Annie," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay. Thank you. It was nice meeting you, President Roosevelt," said Mary Anne.

"Same here. I'll be seeing you tomorrow anyway," said Mr. Gomes.

They left.

"Good work. We can take a break. Then we'll get ready for scene three for I Don't Need Anything But You and Annie," said Mr. Jackson.

Mary Anne went to him and said, "Don't we need to do Something Was Missing before I Don't Need Anything But You and Annie according to my script?"

"You know what? You are so smart to remember that, thank you," said Mr. Jackson as he looked up. "There was an error. Mary Anne just informed me we'll do Something was Missing first."

"How does she know that?" asked Kristy.

"That song is always before I Don't Need Anything But You and Annie in all play versions," replied Kathi.

"Boy, she's so smart on that," said Stacey.

That was when Mary Anne came to join us.

"I'm surprised you remembered that," said Stacey.

"Easy to remember also according to the copy of the play version of Annie DVD," said Mary Anne.

"Good thing you told him," said Kathi.

"I know," agreed Mary Anne.

Then a country singer, Billy Gilman, who was about our age and two years younger than Mal & Jessi, came over to us.

"Hello. Which of you is playing Annie?" asked Billy.

"That's me. I'm Mary Anne Spier," said Mary Anne shyly.

"I'm Billy Gilman. I was watching you rehearsal today and you were super talented especially at singing," said Billy.

"Thank you," said my sister.

"My manager liked your singing voice as well. The entire Annie cast are selected to record the soundtrack at my recordings studio," said Billy.

"Whoa. Are you serious?" asked Kristy.

"Yes," replied Billy.

"Wow," said Mary Anne.

"May I have your autograph, Mary Anne?" asked Billy.

"Oh, my gosh! Yes!" exclaimed Mary Anne excitedly as Billy gave her the pad and paper as she signed her autograph and gave it back to him.

"Thank you," said Billy. "I'll go talk to your director about it."

He left for that.

"Oh, my goodness. I can't believe we're selected to record Annie soundtrack," said Mary Anne.

"I know. This is so exciting," agreed Kristy.

They are very lucky. I don't know if understudies would be doing that. Mr. Jackson must have agreed

with the idea because Billy came back to us.

"It's all set. We'll set a date up in Hollywood," said Billy.

"Sweet," said Mary Anne.

They even cheered on that.

"I'll be staying for the rest of the rehearsal," said Billy.

"Wow," said Kristy.

"Get ready: Mrs. Bleechers, Mr. Lins, Mr. Wallace, and Mrs. Bleechers. The servants would be up after Something was Missing, so get ready when it's getting to the end," said Mr. Jackson.

They went on stage while the servants were backstage. Scene three started as Mary Anne and Mr. Lins returned from the White House going to Mrs. Bleechers.

"Where are my folks? Are they here?" asked Mary Anne.

"I interviewed all of 800 couples and no one knew about the locket," said Mrs. Bleechers.

"Oh," said Mary Anne.

Mr. Linders as Drake came with the telegram and said, "You got a teleman from the FBI."

"That's about Annie's locket," said Mr. Lins taking it to read. "Between 1918 and 1924, thousands of Annie's lockets were made and sold. FBI said it's impossible to trace your parents through it."

Mr. Lins puts the locket back on Mary Anne.

"Oh," said Mary Anne going to sit.

"I'm very sorry," said Mr. Lins.

"I guess the kids can do okay without parents," said Mary Anne.

Mr. Lins sang Something Was Missing.

"Grace?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir?" asked Mrs. Bleechers.

"Where are the adoption papers?" asked Mr. Lins as he went to Mary Anne. "Annie, I want to adopt you."

"Adopt me?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes. What's your answer?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Well, if I can't have my real mom and dad, I would truly love if you were my father, Mr. Warbucks," said Mary Anne as they hugged.

They talked about the party.

"Annie, I'm the luckiest man in the world," said Mr. Lins.

"And I'm the luckiest kid," said Mary Anne.

The song started.

"Together at last," sang Mr. Lins.

"Together forever," sang Mary Anne.

"We're tying a knot so they never can sever," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

"I don't need sunshine to turn my skies to blue," sang Mary Anne.

"I don't need anything but you," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

"You've wrapped me around that cute little finger. You've made life a song. You've made me the singer," sang Mr. Lins.

"And what's the bathtub tune you always Bu-Bu-Boo?" sang Mary Anne.

"Bu-Bu-Bu anything but you," sang Mr. Lins.

"Yesterday was plain awful," sang Mary Anne.

"You can say that again," sang Mr. Lins.

"Yesterday was plain awful," sang Mary Anne.

"But that's," sang Mr. Lins.

"Not now," sang Mary Anne.

"That's then," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

"I'm as poor as a mouse," sang Mary Anne.

"I'm richer than Midas," sang Mr. Lins.

"But nothing on earth could ever divide us. And if tomorrow, I'm an apple seller, too- I don't need anything but you," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

Then they took off while the servant choir sang Annie. Mr. Lins came down.

"Judge Brandeis," said Grace.

"This is terrific. And now may I present Annie," said Mr. Lins.

Mary Anne came going to Mr. Lins as they danced.

"They're two of a kind the happiest pair now. Like Fred and Adelle, they're floating on air now. And what's the title of the dream that just come true?" sang the servants.

"I don't need anything," sang Mr. Lins.

"Anything," sang Mary Anne.

"Anything. I don't need anything but... you!" they all sang as the song ended.

"Splendid job, everyone. Let's take another break and start it again from the top," said Mr. Jackson.

After the rehearsal, we went to Claudia's. They were still talking how about excited they were doing the Annie soundtrack.

"Two more scenes until Act 2 is done. Then we'd be doing the entire Act 2 on Friday," said Kristy.

"And you were famous when Billy asked you for your autograph, Mary Anne," said Stacey.

"I know," agreed Mary Anne.

"Let's drop the...," I started.

"Stop being so jealous again," Kristy interrupted.

"You promised you wouldn't do that again, so don't break it. What if an older orphan couldn't make it, you would have a chance to go," added Mary Anne.

"Exactly," agreed Stacey.

"Be patient," said Kristy.

"You wouldn't like it someone tells you to drop it you're excited for anything. You should be happy for us," continued Claud.

After the meeting, at home, Richard looked much better than before.

"Hi, girls," said Richard.

"Hi, Dad," said Mary Anne at the same time when I said, "Hi, Richard."

"How was the rehearsal today?" asked Richard.

"It was fun. We had a guest country singer named Billy Gilman. He commented me on my singing and acting skills. He even asked me for my autograph," said Mary Anne.

"That's good," said my stepfather.

"According to Billy, his manager liked my singing voice, too. Here's the best part: we were told the entire Annie cast would be recording for the soundtrack," continued my sister.

"That's wonderful, honey," smiled her father.

"I know. We were all thrilled," said Mary Anne.

"I bet," said Richard.

After dinner, Mary Anne went to her room to do the report.

"Is she going to help me though?" I asked.

"She has to continue her report. She's going to be excused. I already told her she could," said Richard.

She started to do some in between breaks. She was done an hour later.

"You're finished already?" I asked.

"I sure am," replied Mary Anne.

"Goodness. You're always done so early," I said.

"I just like to get stuff done ahead of time so I can have free time," my sister told me.

"Did you even copy everything from the book?" I asked.

"You can't do that. You must use your own words like Mr. Holmes mentioned, so that's what I did," said Mary Anne.

The next day, at school, she passed in her report.

"Thank you," said the teacher.

Mary Anne went back to her seat.

"Boy, you're done early," said Kristy.

"I know. I said the same," I said.

"I like to get my work done early," said Mary Anne.

Later, Mary Anne had her report back with an A+ with no errors, sentences are written clearly, etc. Imagine if she'd be perfect writer one day? Most of us get to continue during the report in class.

"May I go the library to return the book?" asked Mary Anne.

"Go ahead," said the teacher as he wrote the pass and gave it to Mary Anne.

"Thank you," said Mary Anne as she left for the library.

She came back in ten to fifteen minutes.

"You may have free time since you were the first one done and passed it," said Mr. Holmes.

"Okay," said Mary Anne.

That was when Billy came in and said, "Hello. May I borrow Mary Anne please?"

"Of course," said the teacher.

She got up and went to him.

"Mr. Jackson just wanted to tell you something you could be excited for," said Billy.

"Nice," said Mary Anne.

In the office, Mr. Jackson was smiling.

"What's going on here?" asked Mary Anne.

"I had a phone call from Stoneybrook Times and an interviewer would be coming here tomorrow morning to interview you and the other Annie cast," replied the director.

"Oh, my gosh. Are you kidding me?" asked Mary Anne.

"No," said Mr. Jackson.

"Wow," said Mary Anne.

"That's not all. How would you feel when I tell you that you'll be on Tony Awards?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"Really? I would feel excited," said Mary Anne.

"In fact, you're selected to perform on stage," continued Mr. Jackson. "I'll make an announcement on that tomorrow."

"Okay," said my sister.

"I'll have more news to give as well," said Mr. Jackson.

18 - Kristy IV

In health, Mary Anne came back excitedly. After school, she was still thrilled.

"Um, Mary Anne, you look so excited about something?" asked Dawn.

"First of all, the entire Annie cast-including me-is going to be interviewed tomorrow morning," replied Mary Anne.

"No way! We are?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Mary Anne.

"Sweet," said Claudia.

"And are you ready for this: I get to perform on Tony Awards," said Mary Anne.

"Way to go, Mary Anne!" I exclaimed. "I can't believe we'll be doing to attend Tony Awards."

"I bet you would be performing Tomorrow with Rocky and Mr. Lins involved," said Claudia.

"Yes just like Brittany Kissinger did," said Mary Anne.

"Lucky you," mumbled Dawn.

Dawn can be so jealous at times.

At the Spier-Schafers' home, Mary Anne was watching the play version of Annie to get ready for tomorrow's rehearsal.

"Do you use both scripts and watch the DVD to practice?" asked Dawn.

"One of them. Since I used the script the other day, I figured I'd watch the video," said Mary Anne.

"Is that how you would memorize everything including songs without using scripts?" asked Dawn.

"Yes. But I still look over before every rehearsal to help me that way," replied her sister.

That night, Mary Anne had her sweatshirt on. I was over for dinner.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"Is it me or is it cold in here?" asked Mary Anne.

"I'll go check the heater," replied Dawn.

She did and it read 65 degrees Fahrenheit as she turned it up to 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

"That's better. Thank you, Dawn," smiled Mary Anne.

Both Sharon and Mr. Spier were working late, so the girls were on their own and had permission to invite me over for supper.

"Any ideas what we're doing for dinner?" asked Mary Anne.

"Mom said we can order Chinese. I got forty dollars from my recent sitting jobs," replied her sister.

"Sounds good," agreed Mary Anne.

"Fine by me, too," I said.

We ordered it ten to twenty minutes later and came in thirty minutes.

"We can watch a movie of Pollyanna while having dinner," said Dawn.

"Okay," Mary Anne and I said.

That's what we did. After we all ate, we paused the movie. Dawn cleared the trays while Mary Anne washed the trays, and I get to put them away. After all that, we continued to watch the movie.

"That was good tonight," said Mary Anne as Dawn and I agreed.

Charlie picked me up after the movie was over. And at that time, Sharon came home from work.

"Hi, girls," said Sharon.

"Hi," said Mary Anne and Dawn.

"Kristy had just left before you got home," said Dawn.

"We did decide to have Chinese," added Mary Anne.

"How was it tonight?" asked Sharon.

"Good," replied Mary Anne. "I have news to give you and Dad when he gets home."

"Okay," said Sharon.

It was almost nine-thirty when Mr. Spier came home. Mary Anne told him and her stepmom about everything between the interview and being on Tony Awards to perform. They were happy for her.

"Do understudies get interviewed as well?" asked Dawn.

"I'm not sure," said Mary Anne. "I'll ask Kathi about it tomorrow."

The next day, Mary Anne spotted Kathi at her locker and went to her.

"Congratulations on being selected to perform on Tony Awards," said Kathi who heard from that.

"Thanks. I have a question. The entire Annie cast, including myself, are going to be interviewed today. Do understudies count? Mr. Jackson didn't mention that part," said Mary Anne.

"Good question," said Kathi shrugging her shoulder.

"There's one way to find out, huh?" asked Mary Anne as Kathi agreed.

We started walking to health class together. Dawn says if she doesn't get interviewed, she'd quit from the play.

"But if you did, you'd lose your chance to take over for an older orphan," Mary Anne pointed out.

"I'm going have to agree," said Kathi who's the understudy of Annie.

After the teacher took attendance, the announcement came out saying to dismiss the whole Annie cast-including understudies-to report to the auditorium right now to be interviewed.

"I guess understudies do you interviewed after all," said Kathi.

We got up and headed to the auditorium. Mary Anne was too excited to get nervous. We went to sit in the row. When everyone was about to start.

"Good morning. This is Mrs. Rosemary James from Stoneybrook Times," said Mr. Jackson.

"Hello, everyone, you're all welcome to call me Rose," said Mrs. James.

"She loved Annie growing up and was honored to interview all of you and figured to do the same to understudies to be fair enough," said Mr. Jackson.

"I'll interview the regular cast, and then the understudies," said Mrs. James.

"Once she's done interviewing you, you may leave. I'll give you the exciting news at the rehearsal," said Mr. Jackson. "Rose, you may begin now."

"Thank you, dear. I'll start with the orphans: Kristy Thomas, Cokie Mason, Marci Jones, Mallory Pike, Claudia Kishi, and Jessica Ramsey," announced Mrs. James.

We went on stage as we went backstage.

"This is going to be exciting," said Mary Anne.

"I'm surprised you're excited to get interviewed," said Dawn.

"Are you kidding! It's the most exciting moment I would never forget, not ever," said Mary Anne.

"Anyone can be too excited to get nervous," added Kathi.

"Plus, we're all in it together, aren't we?" asked Mary Anne.

"That's right," agreed Stacey.

We-orphans-left to get back to class.

"Mary Anne Spier, you're next my superstar," said Mrs. James.

She giggled at that and got on the stage.

"How are you today?" asked Mrs. James.

"I'm excited about this," replied Mary Anne as they headed backstage to sit on the chair.

"First of all, what made you think to audition for Annie?" asked Mrs. James.

"My best friend, Kristy Thomas, told me about it I'd be perfect for Annie because she's like me. We never met our folks. Well, her parents left her at the orphanage as an infant while my mom died when I was very young, so my dad raised me on his own for years. Anyway, Annie's been wanting to meet her folks and she's been looking for them with a help from Mr. Warbucks and found out she was an orphan after all when President Franklin Roosevelt told her about her parents' death," explained Mary Anne.

"What did you had to do to audition for Annie?" asked Mrs. James.

"You would have to sing the end verse of Tomorrow," answered Mary Anne.

"How did you feel when you learned you were playing Annie?" asked Mrs. James.

"My friend, Claudia Kishi, told me she had a surprise for me when she said the cast list was up. I didn't know what was going on. When she did show me, I was thrilled. I couldn't believe it," said Mary Anne.

"Mr. Jackson was telling me you would memorize everything without using your scripts. How did you manage to do so?" asked Mrs. James.

"I would practice my lines by using the scripts at home or watch the play version of Annie that a friend sent me from Maine. Sometimes I would still bring my scripts with me in case I want to look them over again before each rehearsal. Mr. Jackson tells me I'm talented at singing ever since the beginning when we did singing lessons each we started Act 1," replied Mary Anne.

"Were any of the songs like NYC and A New Deal For Christmas hard for you?" asked Mrs. James.

"Not at all. It's fun to practice tough songs," replied Mary Anne.

"What is your favorite scene or scenes so far and why?" asked Mrs. James.

"Um, that's a tough question. To be honest with you, I like all of them. If I did have any favorites, I would say the scene where Annie made a new friend, Sandy the dog. The police officer asked her if the dog was a stray and she said it belongs to her. She had to prove it by calling him Sandy and had to call him to see he would answer to his name," said Mary Anne.

"What song do you like best?" asked the interviewer.

"I have two favorite songs actually. One is Maybe; it tells you a story and like I mentioned before, she wants to meet her folks and would hope they would come back for her one day. I also like Tomorrow; it's a message of hope that everything would be better if you're upset about something," explained my sister.

"How did you feel when Mr. Jackson told you that you were selected to perform on stage for Tony Awards?" asked Mrs. James.

"I was thrilled. I thought he was joking at first, but he wasn't," said Mary Anne laughing.

"And here's the final question. When Billy Gilman told you that the entire Annie cast were going to record for the soundtrack, what was your reaction?" asked Mrs. James.

"I couldn't believe that; I was so excited. In fact, we were all thrilled," said Mary Anne.

"We're done. It was nice meeting you," said Mrs. James.

"Same here, Rose," smiled Mary Anne.

Everyone was done by noontime. At lunch, we were talking about how fun it was.

"Today is the best day ever so far," said Mary Anne.

"I agree," I said.

Later, at the rehearsal, Mr. Jackson was about about to make an announcement.

"We'll be going on a National Tour at every school in every state starting all of the Stoneybrook and Stamford schools. Then we'll be going on a real National Tour all over at the theatre including New York City," announced Mr. Jackson. "Speaking of that, we'll be doing there for the Tony Awards. As you all know, Mary Anne has been chosen to perform on stage."

We all cheered for Mary Anne.

"Also, we'll be doing the movie of Annie there," said Mr. Jackson.

"Wow. Awesome," said Mary Anne.

We were all glad, too. After the announcement, Mr. Jackson said, "Get ready: Mr. Linders, Mr. Lins, Mary Anne, Mr. Lee, Ms. Rosenberg, Mrs. Bleechers, and the servants for scene four."

They all went to the stage. It started when Judge Brandeis was about to start to sign adoption papers when Mr. Linders came by.

"Excuse me, sir, before you start. May I present the Mudges," said Mr. Linders.

Ms. Rosenberg as Lily St. Regis and Mr. Lee as Rooster came in as the Mudges.

"There is our Annie," said Mr. Lee.

"Who are you?" asked Mary Anne.

"Honey, we're your parents," replied Ms. Rosenberg.

"We're Ralph and Shirley Mudge," said Mr. Lee.

"Annie Mudge?" asked Mr. Lins.

"We loved you very much, but we had to leave you behind. We were offered a job on a farm in Canada," explained Ms. Rosenberg.

"We interview about 800 couples and...," Mrs. Bleechers started.

"I'm assuming you want to see our IDs. Here's our driver's licenses and uh, Annie's birth certificate," said Mr. Lee pretending to give them to Mrs. Bleechers going to Mr. Lins.

"Ann Elizabeth Mudge born in New York City on October 28, 1922," read Mr. Lins.

"Hey, that's my birthday," said Mary Anne.

"And there is one more thing," said Mrs. Bleechers.

"Look, Ralph, she's wearing the locket!" exclaimed Ms. Rosenberg.

"See, when we left Annie at the orphanage, we left her with the half-silver locket and kept the other half. When we went to the orphanage, a kind lady told us Annie was here," said Mr. Lee as he took out a piece of a locket and it fits just right. "See? Perfect fit."

"I'm glad we found our little girl," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mr. Mudge, what about the money?" asked Mr. Lins.

"What money?" asked Mr. Lee.

"Mr. Warbucks was offering \$50,000 to the couples who can prove that they're Annie's folks," said Mrs. Bleachers.

"I didn't hear that. Plus, we don't need money," said Mr. Lee.

"On the other hand, we can afford to bring Annie up right with the reward money," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mind if Annie stays here until tomorrow so she can spend Christmas with us? So, you can pick her up along with the check," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, alright, it's fine by us, sir," said Mr. Lee.

"Bye, Annie, dear," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Until tomorrow morning, and then you would be living with us for good," said Mr. Lee as they left when he bumped into Mrs. Bleachers. "Sorry, ma'am."

Mary Anne looked up at Mr. Lins and said, "This is wonderful news. Let's go share with it with the guests."

She went to the center of the stage with her head down and looks up looking pale.

"Drake, champagne," said Mr. Lins.

"Of course, sir," said Mr. Linders.

"We should celebrate. We just got good news tonight. Annie has found her parents. I propose a toast," said Mr. Lins raising Mary Anne looks up. "Here's to Annie Mudge."

"To Annie Mudge," said the rest.

Mary Anne looks again and took off backstage while Mrs. Bleachers follows Mary Anne halfway.

"Annie," said Mrs. Bleachers to Mr. Lins. "Sir, I'm sure I've seen that Mr. Mudge before, but I'm not sure where and he's not who he says."

"We'll not give her until we are certain they're not her real mom and dad," said Mr. Lins. "I'll go straight to the top to the President of the United States."

"Good job, everyone," said Mr. Jackson. "We'll take a break and we'll start the last scene."

Mary Anne came to join us.

"You're still so good at memorizing everything," said Stacey who was with Mary Anne.

"It's so hard to believe that we have one more scene before doing the entire Act 2 on Friday," I said.

"I know," agreed Jessi.

It was time for the last scene with most of us went to backstage. It started on Christmas morning when Mary Anne came with a pretend suitcase and sat on the floor as the song started.

"Silly to cry. Nothing to fear. Betcha where they lived is nice as right here. Betcha my life is gonna be swell. Just looking at them, it's easy to tell. And maybe I'll forget how nice he was to me and how I was almost his baby. Maybe," sang Mary Anne as the song ended.

Mr. Lins and Mrs. Bleechers came noticing Mary Anne.

"Merry Christmas, Annie," said Mr. Lins and Mrs. Bleechers.

"Merry Christmas," said Mary Anne.

"You're up early," said Mr. Lins as he and Mrs. Bleechers sat beside her.

"My parents are coming from New Jersey," said Mary Anne. "You're up early, too."

"We've been up all night with the president," said Mr. Lins.

"You mean he's here?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes," said Mr. Lins.

Then Mr. Lee and Ms. Rosenberg came.

"Hello, Annie, Merry Christmas," said Mr. Lee.

"Here's for the check of \$50,000," said Mrs. Bleechers.

When they got that, it read, "The jig is up."

Mary Anne got puzzled. Then Mr. Gomes came out.

"Well, it's the Mudges. We learned that those were the pen names of Daniel Hannigan known as Rooster & Danny the Dip and Lily St. Regis," said Mr. Gomes.

That was when Mrs. Boyd came with us orphans.

"Merry Christmas," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Merry Christmas," said Mary Anne coming to us.

"Well, it's Agatha Hannigan known as Aggie," said Mr. Gomes.

"She helped us out," said Mr. Lee.

"What?" asked Mary Anne.

"So, you're just pretending to be Annie's parents for the reward money?" asked Mrs. Bleachers.

"Uh, Annie, save me," said Mrs. Boyd going to Mary Anne. "Tell these people I've been good to you."

"I wish I could, Miss Hannigan, but except for one thing, you always taught me never tell a lie," said Mary Anne.

"Your days are numbered," Mallory mocking Mrs. Boyd.

The FBI took Mr. Lee, Mrs. Boyd, and Ms. Rosenberg away. Mary Anne went to us.

"Miss Hannigan is gone for good," said Mary Anne.

"And Annie, I have some news for you. The FBI was able to trace the handwriting from your note," said Mr. Gomes as Mary Anne turned to him. "And your parents are David and Maragret Bennett."

"The Bennetts are my real mom and dad?" asked Mary Anne as he nodded. "Where are they?"

"Annie," said Mr. Lins as she turns to him. "They passed away a long time ago."

"You mean they're in heaven?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid so," replied Mr. Gomes.

"So, I'm an orphan after all," said Mary Anne as she had her head down walking towards to the center.

"Annie, are you alright?" asked Mrs. Bleachers walking halfway while Mary Anne stopped.

"Yeah. I think so," said Mary Anne as she turned slowly. "See, I always my folks loved me and they'd come back for me if they were alive."

"Would you still like to be Annie Bennett Warbucks?" asked Mr. Lins.

"I still like that very much," smiled Mary Anne.

"I love you," said Mr. Lins.

"And I love you more, Daddy Warbucks," said Mary Anne as they hugged.

Mary Anne introduces us to Mr. Lins and everyone else. Then they sang A New Deal For Christmas. Mary Anne was right that song wasn't tough to sing at all.

"Nice work. We'll take another break and then we'll start again from the top," announced Mr. Jackson.

After our meeting, at home, I was in my room doing my report. I had permission to eat in my room so I can work on my report. I was having peanut butter and jelly. Doing it on pregnancy was very simple. First of all, pregnancy women should not take drugs without letting their doctors know or alcohol due to birth defects or miscarriage. Second, they shouldn't drink too much caffeine and should drink about one cup a day. They also shouldn't go on rides that may be too fast. One of the signs of pregnancy is a morning sickness like nausea.

I learn that some babies are born early, on time, or late. If the blood occurs, it's a sign of a miscarriage. That can be pretty scary. Oh, one more thing: I even read that teen mothers should finish education before starting a family. They can do an abortion, an adoption, or keep their babies. Do you know they even get kicked out of their houses by their parents? It's true. Let's say Mr. Spier was still strict. Imagine if Mary Anne got pregnancy? He certainly wouldn't allow that and would probably throw her out. Since he's loosen up now, he'd respect her wishes. Another thing, some teen mothers get forced to raise their babies. Parents or stepparents should let their daughters or stepdaughters decide if they want to do an adoption.

I had just finished my sandwich when I heard a knock on the door.

"Who's there?" I asked.

"It's only me," replied Mom as she entered. "Are you all set with the empty plate?"

"Yes. I just finished them. Thanks, Mom," I said.

"You're welcome, dear. How's the report coming along?" asked Mom taking the plate.

"Almost done," I said. "Doing the report on pregnancy isn't that hard at all."

"That's good," said Mom.

"I know," I agreed.

She left with the empty plate. I was done twenty minutes later and put it away in my folder & my backpack. I got comfy and went downstairs.

"Finish the report already?" asked Mom.

"Yes, just now," I replied.

"How was the rehearsal?" asked Mom.

"Fun. You should see how excellent Mary Anne was. She still can sing and say her lines without looking at the script," I answered.

"Still?" asked Mom.

"Oh, yes," I replied. "Mr. Jackson even comments on that. She states she would either use her script or watch the play version of Annie to help her to be prepared the day before each rehearsal. And if necessary, she would still look it over if she wants to."

"Isn't she worried she might not memorize a thing when the play dates, including the opening night, get here?" asked Nannie.

"No way. Cokie thinks she'd be too 'chicken' to do that, but Mary Anne is going to prove Cokie she'd be still good at it. She's not letting Cokie ruin the big excitement," I told her. "If she ever laughs at my best friend, I'm going to let her have it. See it yourselves."

"Wow. You're a good friend to stop Cokie," said Mom.

"I know. We even had more news. First of all, we're going to Tony Awards and we'll be doing the movie. Plus, we'll be on National Tour at every single school starting here and Stamford soon, and then at all theatre after school lets out. You should see how excited Mary Anne was. As matter of a fact, she was even told she's been selected to perform on Tony Awards. She almost didn't believe the director she thought he was joking," I explained.

"Good for her," said Mom.

"And for you, too, of course," added my stepfather.

"I find Mary Anne feels more comfortable being on stage with all of us Baby-Sitters Club members. The only time she was nervous about was before the locket scene, but actually did it because of the best tricks to do is to think of something sad otherwise she'd be fine," I said.

"That's good," said Mom.

"I'm glad I talked to her into doing it. I told her she'd be fine if we're all in it together and she agreed to do so," I continued.

"That's true," agreed Mom.

"You forced her?" asked Nannie.

"Why did you say that? All I said was she'd be perfect for Annie. I never seen her so excited since she found out she'd be Dawn's new stepsister," I replied.

"I'm afraid that Kristy is correct. What is she doing is helping out her best friend to overcome her shyness and stage fright. I'm proud of her. If it wasn't for Kristy, Mary Anne would be nervous for anything," said Mom.

"Plus, my friends and I promised Mary Anne that she would feel comfortable. You'd keep your promise if you had a friend like that, too. That's what friends are for," I added.

The next day, at school, I passed my report in and asked if I could return the book at the library and the teacher said yes. He wrote a pass and I left for the library. In the library, Cokie the terror, came by while I was returning the book.

"What do you want now?" I wanted to say, but instead I said, "What a nice surprise."

"I found out you forced Mary Anne to do the play," said Cokie.

"Where?" I asked.

"Grace overheard your grandmother," said Cokie. "Mary Anne's still going to be too chicken about everything."

"You're hearing things. I would never force my own best friend to do anything. And for your info, all I said she'd be perfect to do Annie, so just keep your mouth shut and mind your business for once. Say that to Mary Anne, she's not going to believe you. She'd tell you the same thing. Plus, haven't you realized she'd comfortable being on stage with her friends? Why did you think she's excited about stuff for? Mom's proud of me for keeping promises," I said.

"All set," said the librarian.

"Thank you," I said after she signed the pass and headed back to class.

When I got back, I threw the pass out. I noticed Mary Anne seemed pretty upset about something. I betcha she heard Cokie or Grace. I went to the teacher.

"I'll take Mary Anne. She seems to be upset about something," I whispered and went to her. "Are you okay, Mary Anne?"

She didn't answer. I didn't notice the other girls were staring at me like I did something wrong.

"Why don't we take a walk or something?" I suggested.

"Go ahead," said Mr. Holmes.

"Come on," I said as I got her and we left. "We can talk in the girls' bathroom."

We went there.

"I was worried about you. I noticed you were upset," I said. "Is everything okay?"

"I overheard Grace said to Cokie and says I'd still be too chicken," said Mary Anne.

"As in about they think I forced you?" I asked her as she nodded.

"How did you know?" asked Mary Anne.

"Cokie told me. I told her to drop it. I would never force you to do anything. You've been comfortable being on stage with us members like we promised," I replied.

"I know. I always count on you girls trust you," said Mary Anne. "It's nobody's fault."

"Tell me about it. And you were glad when I told you to go for it and you were very brave about it," I added.

"I agree. I'm not upset about that. It's what Cokie said about being too chicken to memorize any of the songs or my lines," said Mary Anne.

"Were the girls staring at me for no reason or something?" I asked.

"If they were, I'd tell them you didn't upset me," said Mary Anne.

"Don't give up to prove Cokie that she's wrong. In fact, Grace overheard Nannie," I said.

"You mean she started that?" asked Mary Anne in a shocked voice.

"You got it," I replied.

When we went back to class, Mary Anne went to the others.

"Why were you girls staring at Kristy?" asked Mary Anne.

"For what she did," said Stacey.

"It's not her, it's Cokie and Grace. Don't make Kristy feel guilty about it. She didn't do anything wrong. The other girls were ones I overheard saying I'd be still too chicken," said Mary Anne. "Grace heard it from Nannie."

"No way," said Claudia.

"Yeah," I said.

At lunch, I went over to Cokie and said, "You and Grace upset my best friend who overheard you both. She agreed with me that I would never force her to do anything. She counts on me and other gals. Don't you dare hurt Mary Anne ever again. Do that at the rehearsal, you wouldn't find it funny if you'd get kicked out."

I went back to join the rest.

"Cokie is so immature," I said as the others agreed.

Thank goodness Marci is starting to be nice to Mary Anne. She knows my friend would do just fine. I even added what Nannie said: too worried about memorizing.

"What makes Nannie thinks I'd be too worried to memorize the lines and the lyrics?" asked Mary Anne.

"I told her you haven't made an error," I answered.

"Oh, good," smiled Mary Anne.

"I mentioned if Cokie ever laughs at you, she'll have a rude of awakening," I continued.

"You're a lifesavior," said Claudia.

"I know," I agreed.

After school, at home, I went to Nannie and said, "I hope you're happy."

"For what?" asked Nannie.

"You knew what you said: thinking I forced Mary Anne to be in the play. Thanks to you, Grace overheard you and Mary Anne heard her & Cokie and got upset. Mary Anne could not believe you started all that. She even agreed I wouldn't force her to do stuff. I told Cokie to drop it," I told her. "Mary Anne hates being teased."

"Don't accuse...," Nannie started.

"Well, you did started all that. Mom did disagree with you and she told you everything," I said as I took off to my room.

How about accusing isn't the word? Blamming that on her would be better. I told Mom that afterwards and was surprised and told Nannie not to start that again. Mr. Spier would not go for that since he's very protective of his little girl. Later, Mary Anne came over for dinner. She nearly spoke a word to Nannie until she apologized.

"Kristy was telling us you would be good at memorizing everything without one look at your script," said Mom.

"It's true," said Mary Anne. "Everyone was shocked when I first did that. I realized that afterwards."

"I bet," agreed Mom.

"Would you continue to be in any more plays?" asked Watson.

"Maybe if I have most of my friends on stage with me," replied Mary Anne.

"True," said Mom.

"I can't wait for everything now," said Mary Anne.

"We're very proud of you," said my stepdad.

"Thanks," smiled Mary Anne. "My dad and Sharon are proud of me, too."

"We'll be having a dress rehearsal next week," I added.

"That's true according to our schedule," said Mary Anne.

"And we'll be in New York City next weekend for both Tony Awards and the movie," I continued.

"It's so hard to believe that's coming up already. I wonder when we'll be recording the Annie soundtrack," said Mary Anne.

"Me, too," I nodded. "I wonder that would be in New York City."

"Except for one thing, didn't Billy Gilman say in Hollywood?" asked my best friend.

"Oh, yeah," I said as we laughed.

After dinner, Mary Anne and I were playing crazy eights when the doorbell rang.

"That's probably my father," said Mary Anne.

When I got up to open the door, she was right.

"Hi, Dad," said Mary Anne as she got her coat.

"All set to go, sweetie?" asked Dad.

"Yes. See you tomorrow, Kristy. Thanks for supper," said Mary Anne.

"Not a problem," said Watson as she and her father left for home.

19 - Mary Anne VII

In health, Mary Anne came back excitedly. After school, she was still thrilled.

"Um, Mary Anne, you look so excited about something?" asked Dawn.

"First of all, the entire Annie cast-including me-is going to be interviewed tomorrow morning," replied Mary Anne.

"No way! We are?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Mary Anne.

"Sweet," said Claudia.

"And are you ready for this: I get to perform on Tony Awards," said Mary Anne.

"Way to go, Mary Anne!" I exclaimed. "I can't believe we'll be doing to attend Tony Awards."

"I bet you would be performing Tomorrow with Rocky and Mr. Lins involved," said Claudia.

"Yes just like Brittany Kissinger did," said Mary Anne.

"Lucky you," mumbled Dawn.

Dawn can be so jealous at times.

At the Spier-Schafers' home, Mary Anne was watching the play version of Annie to get ready for tomorrow's rehearsal.

"Do you use both scripts and watch the DVD to practice?" asked Dawn.

"One of them. Since I used the script the other day, I figured I'd watch the video," said Mary Anne.

"Is that how you would memorize everything including songs without using scripts?" asked Dawn.

"Yes. But I still look over before every rehearsal to help me that way," replied her sister.

That night, Mary Anne had her sweatshirt on. I was over for dinner.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

"Is it me or is it cold in here?" asked Mary Anne.

"I'll go check the heater," replied Dawn.

She did and it read 65 degrees Fahrenheit as she turned it up to 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

"That's better. Thank you, Dawn," smiled Mary Anne.

Both Sharon and Mr. Spier were working late, so the girls were on their own and had permission to invite me over for supper.

"Any ideas what we're doing for dinner?" asked Mary Anne.

"Mom said we can order Chinese. I got forty dollars from my recent sitting jobs," replied her sister.

"Sounds good," agreed Mary Anne.

"Fine by me, too," I said.

We ordered it ten to twenty minutes later and came in thirty minutes.

"We can watch a movie of Pollyanna while having dinner," said Dawn.

"Okay," Mary Anne and I said.

That's what we did. After we all ate, we paused the movie. Dawn cleared the trays while Mary Anne washed the trays, and I get to put them away. After all that, we continued to watch the movie.

"That was good tonight," said Mary Anne as Dawn and I agreed.

Charlie picked me up after the movie was over. And at that time, Sharon came home from work.

"Hi, girls," said Sharon.

"Hi," said Mary Anne and Dawn.

"Kristy had just left before you got home," said Dawn.

"We did decide to have Chinese," added Mary Anne.

"How was it tonight?" asked Sharon.

"Good," replied Mary Anne. "I have news to give you and Dad when he gets home."

"Okay," said Sharon.

It was almost nine-thirty when Mr. Spier came home. Mary Anne told him and her stepmom about everything between the interview and being on Tony Awards to perform. They were happy for her.

"Do understudies get interviewed as well?" asked Dawn.

"I'm not sure," said Mary Anne. "I'll ask Kathi about it tomorrow."

The next day, Mary Anne spotted Kathi at her locker and went to her.

"Congratulations on being selected to perform on Tony Awards," said Kathi who heard from that.

"Thanks. I have a question. The entire Annie cast, including myself, are going to be interviewed today. Do understudies count? Mr. Jackson didn't mention that part," said Mary Anne.

"Good question," said Kathi shrugging her shoulder.

"There's one way to find out, huh?" asked Mary Anne as Kathi agreed.

We started walking to health class together. Dawn says if she doesn't get interviewed, she'd quit from the play.

"But if you did, you'd lose your chance to take over for an older orphan," Mary Anne pointed out.

"I'm going have to agree," said Kathi who's the understudy of Annie.

After the teacher took attendance, the announcement came out saying to dismiss the whole Annie cast-including understudies-to report to the auditorium right now to be interviewed.

"I guess understudies do you interviewed after all," said Kathi.

We got up and headed to the auditorium. Mary Anne was too excited to get nervous. We went to sit in the row. When everyone was about to start.

"Good morning. This is Mrs. Rosemary James from Stoneybrook Times," said Mr. Jackson.

"Hello, everyone, you're all welcome to call me Rose," said Mrs. James.

"She loved Annie growing up and was honored to interview all of you and figured to do the same to understudies to be fair enough," said Mr. Jackson.

"I'll interview the regular cast, and then the understudies," said Mrs. James.

"Once she's done interviewing you, you may leave. I'll give you the exciting news at the rehearsal," said Mr. Jackson. "Rose, you may begin now."

"Thank you, dear. I'll start with the orphans: Kristy Thomas, Cokie Mason, Marci Jones, Mallory Pike, Claudia Kishi, and Jessica Ramsey," announced Mrs. James.

We went on stage as we went backstage.

"This is going to be exciting," said Mary Anne.

"I'm surprised you're excited to get interviewed," said Dawn.

"Are you kidding! It's the most exciting moment I would never forget, not ever," said Mary Anne.

"Anyone can be too excited to get nervous," added Kathi.

"Plus, we're all in it together, aren't we?" asked Mary Anne.

"That's right," agreed Stacey.

We-orphans-left to get back to class.

"Mary Anne Spier, you're next my superstar," said Mrs. James.

She giggled at that and got on the stage.

"How are you today?" asked Mrs. James.

"I'm excited about this," replied Mary Anne as they headed backstage to sit on the chair.

"First of all, what made you think to audition for Annie?" asked Mrs. James.

"My best friend, Kristy Thomas, told me about it I'd be perfect for Annie because she's like me. We never met our folks. Well, her parents left her at the orphanage as an infant while my mom died when I was very young, so my dad raised me on his own for years. Anyway, Annie's been wanting to meet her folks and she's been looking for them with a help from Mr. Warbucks and found out she was an orphan after all when President Franklin Roosevelt told her about her parents' death," explained Mary Anne.

"What did you had to do to audition for Annie?" asked Mrs. James.

"You would have to sing the end verse of Tomorrow," answered Mary Anne.

"How did you feel when you learned you were playing Annie?" asked Mrs. James.

"My friend, Claudia Kishi, told me she had a surprise for me when she said the cast list was up. I didn't know what was going on. When she did show me, I was thrilled. I couldn't believe it," said Mary Anne.

"Mr. Jackson was telling me you would memorize everything without using your scripts. How did you manage to do so?" asked Mrs. James.

"I would practice my lines by using the scripts at home or watch the play version of Annie that a friend sent me from Maine. Sometimes I would still bring my scripts with me in case I want to look them over again before each rehearsal. Mr. Jackson tells me I'm talented at singing ever since the beginning when we did singing lessons each we started Act 1," replied Mary Anne.

"Were any of the songs like NYC and A New Deal For Christmas hard for you?" asked Mrs. James.

"Not at all. It's fun to practice tough songs," replied Mary Anne.

"What is your favorite scene or scenes so far and why?" asked Mrs. James.

"Um, that's a tough question. To be honest with you, I like all of them. If I did have any favorites, I would say the scene where Annie made a new friend, Sandy the dog. The police officer asked her if the dog was a stray and she said it belongs to her. She had to prove it by calling him Sandy and had to call him to see he would answer to his name," said Mary Anne.

"What song do you like best?" asked the interviewer.

"I have two favorite songs actually. One is Maybe; it tells you a story and like I mentioned before, she wants to meet her folks and would hope they would come back for her one day. I also like Tomorrow; it's a message of hope that everything would be better if you're upset about something," explained my sister.

"How did you feel when Mr. Jackson told you that you were selected to perform on stage for Tony Awards?" asked Mrs. James.

"I was thrilled. I thought he was joking at first, but he wasn't," said Mary Anne laughing.

"And here's the final question. When Billy Gilman told you that the entire Annie cast were going to record for the soundtrack, what was your reaction?" asked Mrs. James.

"I couldn't believe that; I was so excited. In fact, we were all thrilled," said Mary Anne.

"We're done. It was nice meeting you," said Mrs. James.

"Same here, Rose," smiled Mary Anne.

Everyone was done by noontime. At lunch, we were talking about how fun it was.

"Today is the best day ever so far," said Mary Anne.

"I agree," I said.

Later, at the rehearsal, Mr. Jackson was about about to make an announcement.

"We'll be going on a National Tour at every school in every state starting all of the Stoneybrook and Stamford schools. Then we'll be going on a real National Tour all over at the theatre including New York City," announced Mr. Jackson. "Speaking of that, we'll be doing there for the Tony Awards. As you all know, Mary Anne has been chosen to perform on stage."

We all cheered for Mary Anne.

"Also, we'll be doing the movie of Annie there," said Mr. Jackson.

"Wow. Awesome," said Mary Anne.

We were all glad, too. After the announcement, Mr. Jackson said, "Get ready: Mr. Linders, Mr. Lins, Mary Anne, Mr. Lee, Ms. Rosenberg, Mrs. Bleechers, and the servants for scene four."

They all went to the stage. It started when Judge Brandeis was about to start to sign adoption papers when Mr. Linders came by.

"Excuse me, sir, before you start. May I present the Mudges," said Mr. Linders.

Ms. Rosenberg as Lily St. Regis and Mr. Lee as Rooster came in as the Mudges.

"There is our Annie," said Mr. Lee.

"Who are you?" asked Mary Anne.

"Honey, we're your parents," replied Ms. Rosenberg.

"We're Ralph and Shirley Mudge," said Mr. Lee.

"Annie Mudge?" asked Mr. Lins.

"We loved you very much, but we had to leave you behind. We were offered a job on a farm in Canada," explained Ms. Rosenberg.

"We interview about 800 couples and...," Mrs. Bleechers started.

"I'm assuming you want to see our IDs. Here's our driver's licenses and uh, Annie's birth certificate," said Mr. Lee pretending to give them to Mrs. Bleechers going to Mr. Lins.

"Ann Elizabeth Mudge born in New York City on October 28, 1922," read Mr. Lins.

"Hey, that's my birthday," said Mary Anne.

"And there is one more thing," said Mrs. Bleechers.

"Look, Ralph, she's wearing the locket!" exclaimed Ms. Rosenberg.

"See, when we left Annie at the orphanage, we left her with the half-silver locket and kept the other half. When we went to the orphanage, a kind lady told us Annie was here," said Mr. Lee as he took out a piece of a locket and it fits just right. "See? Perfect fit."

"I'm glad we found our little girl," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mr. Mudge, what about the money?" asked Mr. Lins.

"What money?" asked Mr. Lee.

"Mr. Warbucks was offering \$50,000 to the couples who can prove that they're Annie's folks," said Mrs. Bleachers.

"I didn't hear that. Plus, we don't need money," said Mr. Lee.

"On the other hand, we can afford to bring Annie up right with the reward money," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mind if Annie stays here until tomorrow so she can spend Christmas with us? So, you can pick her up along with the check," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, alright, it's fine by us, sir," said Mr. Lee.

"Bye, Annie, dear," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Until tomorrow morning, and then you would be living with us for good," said Mr. Lee as they left when he bumped into Mrs. Bleachers. "Sorry, ma'am."

Mary Anne looked up at Mr. Lins and said, "This is wonderful news. Let's go share with it with the guests."

She went to the center of the stage with her head down and looks up looking pale.

"Drake, champagne," said Mr. Lins.

"Of course, sir," said Mr. Linders.

"We should celebrate. We just got good news tonight. Annie has found her parents. I propose a toast," said Mr. Lins raising Mary Anne looks up. "Here's to Annie Mudge."

"To Annie Mudge," said the rest.

Mary Anne looks again and took off backstage while Mrs. Bleachers follows Mary Anne halfway.

"Annie," said Mrs. Bleachers to Mr. Lins. "Sir, I'm sure I've seen that Mr. Mudge before, but I'm not sure where and he's not who he says."

"We'll not give her until we are certain they're not her real mom and dad," said Mr. Lins. "I'll go straight to the top to the President of the United States."

"Good job, everyone," said Mr. Jackson. "We'll take a break and we'll start the last scene."

Mary Anne came to join us.

"You're still so good at memorizing everything," said Stacey who was with Mary Anne.

"It's so hard to believe that we have one more scene before doing the entire Act 2 on Friday," I said.

"I know," agreed Jessi.

It was time for the last scene with most of us went to backstage. It started on Christmas morning when Mary Anne came with a pretend suitcase and sat on the floor as the song started.

"Silly to cry. Nothing to fear. Betcha where they lived is nice as right here. Betcha my life is gonna be swell. Just looking at them, it's easy to tell. And maybe I'll forget how nice he was to me and how I was almost his baby. Maybe," sang Mary Anne as the song ended.

Mr. Lins and Mrs. Bleechers came noticing Mary Anne.

"Merry Christmas, Annie," said Mr. Lins and Mrs. Bleechers.

"Merry Christmas," said Mary Anne.

"You're up early," said Mr. Lins as he and Mrs. Bleechers sat beside her.

"My parents are coming from New Jersey," said Mary Anne. "You're up early, too."

"We've been up all night with the president," said Mr. Lins.

"You mean he's here?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes," said Mr. Lins.

Then Mr. Lee and Ms. Rosenberg came.

"Hello, Annie, Merry Christmas," said Mr. Lee.

"Here's for the check of \$50,000," said Mrs. Bleechers.

When they got that, it read, "The jig is up."

Mary Anne got puzzled. Then Mr. Gomes came out.

"Well, it's the Mudges. We learned that those were the pen names of Daniel Hannigan known as Rooster & Danny the Dip and Lily St. Regis," said Mr. Gomes.

That was when Mrs. Boyd came with us orphans.

"Merry Christmas," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Merry Christmas," said Mary Anne coming to us.

"Well, it's Agatha Hannigan known as Aggie," said Mr. Gomes.

"She helped us out," said Mr. Lee.

"What?" asked Mary Anne.

"So, you're just pretending to be Annie's parents for the reward money?" asked Mrs. Bleechers.

"Uh, Annie, save me," said Mrs. Boyd going to Mary Anne. "Tell these people I've been good to you."

"I wish I could, Miss Hannigan, but except for one thing, you always taught me never tell a lie," said Mary Anne.

"Your days are numbered," Mallory mocking Mrs. Boyd.

The FBI took Mr. Lee, Mrs. Boyd, and Ms. Rosenberg away. Mary Anne went to us.

"Miss Hannigan is gone for good," said Mary Anne.

"And Annie, I have some news for you. The FBI was able to trace the handwriting from your note," said Mr. Gomes as Mary Anne turned to him. "And your parents are David and Maragret Bennett."

"The Bennetts are my real mom and dad?" asked Mary Anne as he nodded. "Where are they?"

"Annie," said Mr. Lins as she turns to him. "They passed away a long time ago."

"You mean they're in heaven?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid so," replied Mr. Gomes.

"So, I'm an orphan after all," said Mary Anne as she had her head down walking towards to the center.

"Annie, are you alright?" asked Mrs. Bleechers walking halfway while Mary Anne stopped.

"Yeah. I think so," said Mary Anne as she turned slowly. "See, I always my folks loved me and they'd come back for me if they were alive."

"Would you still like to be Annie Bennett Warbucks?" asked Mr. Lins.

"I still like that very much," smiled Mary Anne.

"I love you," said Mr. Lins.

"And I love you more, Daddy Warbucks," said Mary Anne as they hugged.

Mary Anne introduces us to Mr. Lins and everyone else. Then they sang A New Deal For Christmas. Mary Anne was right that song wasn't tough to sing at all.

"Nice work. We'll take another break and then we'll start again from the top," announced Mr. Jackson.

After our meeting, at home, I was in my room doing my report. I had permission to eat in my room so I can work on my report. I was having peanut butter and jelly. Doing it on pregnancy was very simple. First of all, pregnancy women should not take drugs without letting their doctors know or alcohol due to birth defects or miscarriage. Second, they shouldn't drink too much caffeine and should drink about one cup a day. They also shouldn't go on rides that may be too fast. One of the signs of pregnancy is a morning sickness like nausea.

I learn that some babies are born early, on time, or late. If the blood occurs, it's a sign of a miscarriage. That can be pretty scary. Oh, one more thing: I even read that teen mothers should finish education before starting a family. They can do an abortion, an adoption, or keep their babies. Do you know they even get kicked out of their houses by their parents? It's true. Let's say Mr. Spier was still strict. Imagine if Mary Anne got pregnancy? He certainly wouldn't allow that and would probably throw her out. Since he's loosen up now, he'd respect her wishes. Another thing, some teen mothers get forced to raise their babies. Parents or stepparents should let their daughters or stepdaughters decide if they want to do an adoption.

I had just finished my sandwich when I heard a knock on the door.

"Who's there?" I asked.

"It's only me," replied Mom as she entered. "Are you all set with the empty plate?"

"Yes. I just finished them. Thanks, Mom," I said.

"You're welcome, dear. How's the report coming along?" asked Mom taking the plate.

"Almost done," I said. "Doing the report on pregnancy isn't that hard at all."

"That's good," said Mom.

"I know," I agreed.

She left with the empty plate. I was done twenty minutes later and put it away in my folder & my backpack. I got comfy and went downstairs.

"Finish the report already?" asked Mom.

"Yes, just now," I replied.

"How was the rehearsal?" asked Mom.

"Fun. You should see how excellent Mary Anne was. She still can sing and say her lines without looking at the script," I answered.

"Still?" asked Mom.

"Oh, yes," I replied. "Mr. Jackson even comments on that. She states she would either use her script or watch the play version of Annie to help her to be prepared the day before each rehearsal. And if necessary, she would still look it over if she wants to."

"Isn't she worried she might not memorize a thing when the play dates, including the opening night, get here?" asked Nannie.

"No way. Cokie thinks she'd be too 'chicken' to do that, but Mary Anne is going to prove Cokie she'd be still good at it. She's not letting Cokie ruin the big excitement," I told her. "If she ever laughs at my best friend, I'm going to let her have it. See it yourselves."

"Wow. You're a good friend to stop Cokie," said Mom.

"I know. We even had more news. First of all, we're going to Tony Awards and we'll be doing the movie. Plus, we'll be on National Tour at every single school starting here and Stamford soon, and then at all theatre after school lets out. You should see how excited Mary Anne was. As matter of a fact, she was even told she's been selected to perform on Tony Awards. She almost didn't believe the director she thought he was joking," I explained.

"Good for her," said Mom.

"And for you, too, of course," added my stepfather.

"I find Mary Anne feels more comfortable being on stage with all of us Baby-Sitters Club members. The only time she was nervous about was before the locket scene, but actually did it because of the best tricks to do is to think of something sad otherwise she'd be fine," I said.

"That's good," said Mom.

"I'm glad I talked to her into doing it. I told her she'd be fine if we're all in it together and she agreed to do so," I continued.

"That's true," agreed Mom.

"You forced her?" asked Nannie.

"Why did you say that? All I said was she'd be perfect for Annie. I never seen her so excited since she found out she'd be Dawn's new stepsister," I replied.

"I'm afraid that Kristy is correct. What is she doing is helping out her best friend to overcome her shyness and stage fright. I'm proud of her. If it wasn't for Kristy, Mary Anne would be nervous for anything," said Mom.

"Plus, my friends and I promised Mary Anne that she would feel comfortable. You'd keep your promise if you had a friend like that, too. That's what friends are for," I added.

The next day, at school, I passed my report in and asked if I could return the book at the library and the teacher said yes. He wrote a pass and I left for the library. In the library, Cokie the terror, came by while I was returning the book.

"What do you want now?" I wanted to say, but instead I said, "What a nice surprise."

"I found out you forced Mary Anne to do the play," said Cokie.

"Where?" I asked.

"Grace overheard your grandmother," said Cokie. "Mary Anne's still going to be too chicken about everything."

"You're hearing things. I would never force my own best friend to do anything. And for your info, all I said she'd be perfect to do Annie, so just keep your mouth shut and mind your business for once. Say that to Mary Anne, she's not going to believe you. She'd tell you the same thing. Plus, haven't you realized she'd comfortable being on stage with her friends? Why did you think she's excited about stuff for? Mom's proud of me for keeping promises," I said.

"All set," said the librarian.

"Thank you," I said after she signed the pass and headed back to class.

When I got back, I threw the pass out. I noticed Mary Anne seemed pretty upset about something. I betcha she heard Cokie or Grace. I went to the teacher.

"I'll take Mary Anne. She seems to be upset about something," I whispered and went to her. "Are you okay, Mary Anne?"

She didn't answer. I didn't notice the other girls were staring at me like I did something wrong.

"Why don't we take a walk or something?" I suggested.

"Go ahead," said Mr. Holmes.

"Come on," I said as I got her and we left. "We can talk in the girls' bathroom."

We went there.

"I was worried about you. I noticed you were upset," I said. "Is everything okay?"

"I overheard Grace said to Cokie and says I'd still be too chicken," said Mary Anne.

"As in about they think I forced you?" I asked her as she nodded.

"How did you know?" asked Mary Anne.

"Cokie told me. I told her to drop it. I would never force you to do anything. You've been comfortable being on stage with us members like we promised," I replied.

"I know. I always count on you girls to trust me," said Mary Anne. "It's nobody's fault."

"Tell me about it. And you were glad when I told you to go for it and you were very brave about it," I added.

"I agree. I'm not upset about that. It's what Cokie said about being too chicken to memorize any of the songs or my lines," said Mary Anne.

"Were the girls staring at me for no reason or something?" I asked.

"If they were, I'd tell them you didn't upset me," said Mary Anne.

"Don't give up to prove Cokie that she's wrong. In fact, Grace overheard Nannie," I said.

"You mean she started that?" asked Mary Anne in a shocked voice.

"You got it," I replied.

When we went back to class, Mary Anne went to the others.

"Why were you girls staring at Kristy?" asked Mary Anne.

"For what she did," said Stacey.

"It's not her, it's Cokie and Grace. Don't make Kristy feel guilty about it. She didn't do anything wrong. The other girls were ones I overheard saying I'd be still too chicken," said Mary Anne. "Grace heard it from Nannie."

"No way," said Claudia.

"Yeah," I said.

At lunch, I went over to Cokie and said, "You and Grace upset my best friend who overheard you both. She agreed with me that I would never force her to do anything. She counts on me and other girls. Don't you dare hurt Mary Anne ever again. Do that at the rehearsal, you wouldn't find it funny if you'd get kicked out."

I went back to join the rest.

"Cokie is so immature," I said as the others agreed.

Thank goodness Marci is starting to be nice to Mary Anne. She knows my friend would do just fine. I even added what Nannie said: too worried about memorizing.

"What makes Nannie thinks I'd be too worried to memorize the lines and the lyrics?" asked Mary Anne.

"I told her you haven't made an error," I answered.

"Oh, good," smiled Mary Anne.

"I mentioned if Cokie ever laughs at you, she'll have a rude of awakening," I continued.

"You're a lifesavior," said Claudia.

"I know," I agreed.

After school, at home, I went to Nannie and said, "I hope you're happy."

"For what?" asked Nannie.

"You knew what you said: thinking I forced Mary Anne to be in the play. Thanks to you, Grace overheard you and Mary Anne heard her & Cokie and got upset. Mary Anne could not believe you started all that. She even agreed I wouldn't force her to do stuff. I told Cokie to drop it," I told her. "Mary Anne hates being teased."

"Don't accuse...," Nannie started.

"Well, you did started all that. Mom did disagree with you and she told you everything," I said as I took off to my room.

How about accusing isn't the word? Blamming that on her would be better. I told Mom that afterwards and was surprised and told Nannie not to start that again. Mr. Spier would not go for that since he's very protective of his little girl. Later, Mary Anne came over for dinner. She nearly spoke a word to Nannie until she apologized.

"Kristy was telling us you would be good at memorizing everything without one look at your script," said Mom.

"It's true," said Mary Anne. "Everyone was shocked when I first did that. I realized that afterwards."

"I bet," agreed Mom.

"Would you continue to be in any more plays?" asked Watson.

"Maybe if I have most of my friends on stage with me," replied Mary Anne.

"True," said Mom.

"I can't wait for everything now," said Mary Anne.

"We're very proud of you," said my stepdad.

"Thanks," smiled Mary Anne. "My dad and Sharon are proud of me, too."

"We'll be having a dress rehearsal next week," I added.

"That's true according to our schedule," said Mary Anne.

"And we'll be in New York City next weekend for both Tony Awards and the movie," I continued.

"It's so hard to believe that's coming up already. I wonder when we'll be recording the Annie soundtrack," said Mary Anne.

"Me, too," I nodded. "I wonder that would be in New York City."

"Except for one thing, didn't Billy Gilman say in Hollywood?" asked my best friend.

"Oh, yeah," I said as we laughed.

After dinner, Mary Anne and I were playing crazy eights when the doorbell rang.

"That's probably my father," said Mary Anne.

When I got up to open the door, she was right.

"Hi, Dad," said Mary Anne as she got her coat.

"All set to go, sweetie?" asked Dad.

"Yes. See you tomorrow, Kristy. Thanks for supper," said Mary Anne.

"Not a problem," said Watson as she and her father left for home.

20 - Stacey III

A week later, on Wednesday, it was the day we get to perform the entire play. Mary Anne was ready. She looked very nice in the blue work dress with the yellow shirt under it. We were getting make-up and hair done. Besides being the Star-To-Be and the servant, I'm in the scene with the homeless people.

"You still look sharp in the costumes," I commented.

"Thanks," said Mary Anne.

Her hair was going to up in a ponytail with a braid in it. It was her choice anyway. She was ready after that. She'd have curls later for the adoption party before Ms. Rosenberg and Mr. Lee interrupts. They don't have any other parts besides Lily and Rooster. She went backstage.

"This is very exciting," said Mary Anne.

"I bet. This is it," said Kristy.

She was wearing a red work dress and white shirt under it. Then the play was about to start. The musicians did the overtone and then the curtain went up.

"Mama! Mama! Mommy!" Mallory called out.

"Shut up," said Marci.

"Can't anyone get any sleep around here?" asked Cokie.

"Mama! Mommy!" called Mallory.

"I said shut your trap, Molly," said Marci pushing Mal off the bed.

"Don't push that poor kid. She did nothing to you," said Claudia.

"She kept me up awake, ain't she?" asked Marci.

"No, you're keeping us awake," said Claudia.

"Wanna make something out of it, July?" asked Marci.

They started fighting.

"Oh, my goodness. They're fighting," said Jessi.

Mary Anne came from the curtain.

"Pipe down! All of you! Go back to sleep!" said Mary Anne going to Mallory. "It's alright, Molly, Annie's here."

"It was my mama, Annie, we were riding on a ferryboat. She was holding me to see all the big ships. And then she left waving and I couldn't find her anymore," said Mallory.

"It's only a dream, honey, you have to get back to sleep now. It's after three o'clock," said Mary Anne.

"Annie, read me your note," said Mallory.

"My note? Again?" asked Mary Anne.

"Please?" asked Mallory.

"Sure, Molly," replied Mary Anne.

"Here it comes again. Ahh!" shouted Marci.

Everyone laughed.

"Please take good care of our little darling. Her name is Annie. She was born on....," started Mary Anne.

"She was born on October 28th. We'll be back to get her soon," said Cokie.

"We have left a half-silver locket around her neck and kept the other half," said Cokie and Marci.

"So that when we come back for her, you will know that she's our baby," said the rest except for Mal and Jessi as they were laughing.

"Oh, my goodness! Now they're laughing," said Jessi.

"Alright," said Mary Anne going to Marci angrily. "Do you wanna sleep with your teeth inside your mouth or out?"

They laughed as Mary Anne headed back to Mallory.

"Gee, Annie, you're lucky. I wish I'd have my parents again, but you really got them," said Mallory.

"I know. Somewhere," said Mary Anne as the song started. "Maybe far away or maybe real nearby. He may be pouring her coffee. She may be straightening his tie. Maybe in a house, all hidden by a hill. She's sitting playing piano. He's sitting paying a bill. Betcha they're young, betcha they're smart. Bet they collect things like ashtrays and art. Betcha they're good. Why shouldn't they be? Their one mistake was giving up me. So, maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe."

The song continued as Mary Anne puts Mallory in bed and sat on her side of the bed.

"Betcha he reads, betcha she sews. Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes. Maybe they're strict as straight as a line. Don't really care as long as they're mine. So, maybe now this prayer's the last one of its kind. Won't you please come get your baby?" sang Mary Anne as she laid in bed. "Maybe."

The song ended as the audience applauded. The clock chimed for four am. Mary Anne gets up, looks out the window, and went to under the bed to pack a bag.

"Now what?" asked Marci.

"Annie, what are you doing?" asked Kristy.

"I'm running away," replied Mary Anne.

"Oh, my goodness," said Jessi.

"My parents aren't coming back for me, so I'm going to find them," said Mary Anne.

"Annie, you're nuts. Miss Hannigan will catch you," warned Claudia.

"And hit you with the paddle," added Jessi.

"I don't care. I'm getting out of here. Okay, I'm ready. Wish me luck," said Mary Anne.

"Good luck, Annie," said the others.

"Good luck, Dumbbell," said Marci.

Mary Anne was trying to get out when Mrs. Boyd, playing Miss Hannigan, came.

"Ahh. I caught you! I hear you. I always hear you. Bend over," said Mrs. Boyd as she stood still. "I said bend over."

She did as Mrs. Boyd hit Mary Anne with the paddle.

"Now what do you say?" asked Mrs. Boyd as Mary Anne remained silent. "What you do say?"

"I love you, Miss Hannigan," replied Mary Anne.

"Rotten orphan," said Mrs. Boyd.

"I'm not an orphan. My folks left me with a note saying they love me and they'd come back for me," said Mary Anne.

"That was 1922. This is 1933. Get up, everyone!" said Mrs. Boyd. "Annie was trying to escape again. You're all going to strip the beds for the laundry man."

"But it's four o'clock in the morning," said Jessi.

"Oh, I know. Then you'll get down on your knees and clean this dump until it shines like the top of the Chrysler Building," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Yes, Miss Hannigan," said the rest.

"Get to work. Now," said Mrs. Boyd. "Why a kid wants to be an orphan? I'll never know."

The audience laughed as the song started.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us," they sang.

"Instead of treated," sang Mary Anne.

"We get tricked," they sang.

"Instead of kisses," sang Mary Anne.

"We get kicked. It's the hard-knock life," they sang. "We got no folks to speak of, so it's the hard-knock role we hoe."

"Cotton blankets," sang Mary Anne.

"Instead of wool," they sang.

"Empty bellies," sang Mary Anne.

"Instead of full, it's the hard-knock life," they sang.

"Don't it feel like the wind is always howling?" sang Mary Anne.

"Don't it seem there's never any light?" sang Claudia and Kristy.

"Once a day, don't you wanna throw the towel in?" sang Mallory and Jessi.

"It's easier than putting up a fight," sang Marci and Cokie.

"No one's there when your dreams at night get creepy, no one cares if you grow or if you shrink, no one dries your eyes when they get weepy," sang Mary Anne.

"From the crying you think this place's sink. Oh!" they sang. "Empty-bellies life, rotten-smelly life, full-of-sorrow life, no-tomorrow life."

"Santa Claus we never see," sang Mallory.

"Santa Claus, what's that? Who's he?" sang Mary Anne.

"No one cares for you a smidge when you're in the orphanage," they sang.

"You'll stay up till this dump shines like the top of the Chrysler Building," said Mallory pretending to be Miss Hannigan.

"Yank the whiskers from her chin. Jab her with a safety pin. Make her drink a mickey finn," they sang. "I love you, Miss Hannigan."

"Get to work now! Strip the beds! I said get to work!" said Mallory.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us. No one cares for you a smidge when you're in an orphanage. It's the hard-knock life, it's the hard-knock life, it's...the...hard-knock...life!" they sang as the song ended.

They applauded.

Then Mrs. Boyd came and blew the whistle.

"Good morning, children," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Good morning, Miss Hannigan," they said.

"Well?" asked Mrs. Boyd.

"We love you, Miss Hannigan," they said.

"We love you, Miss Hannigan," said Mallory from the laundry basket as the audience laughed.

Mrs. Boyd went there and said, "What are you doing in there?"

"Nothing," said Mallory.

"Get her out of there. Your days are numbered," said Mrs. Boyd.

Mr. Lohan as Mr. Bundles arrives and said, "Laundry man. Good morning, kids."

"Morning, Mr. Bundles," they said.

"I got clean sheets every month," said Mr. Lohan.

Mary Anne and the orphans got them. While Mr. Lohan was chatting with Mrs. Boyd, Mary Anne climbed into the laundry basket lying in it while the girls covered her. They finished in time and Mr. Lohan left.

"You call this clean, Annie? This is still messy," said Mrs. Boyd with no respond. "Annie? Annie?"

"Annie ain't here," the orphans choired.

"What do you mean Annie ain't here?" asked Mrs. Boyd.

"She just left with Mr. Bundles," said Kristy.

"In the laundry basket," added Marci.

"Mr. Bundles! Help, police!" exclaimed Mrs. Boyd leaving the stage while they were laughing.

They did the reprise of It's The Hard-Knock Life. The scene changed to outside while Mary Anne was walking.

"Apples for sell. Apples for sell," said Mrs. Young. "Do you want one, young lady?"

"Yes, please. Thank you, ma'am," replied Mary Anne as she sat down.

"Have you seen a stray around here?" asked Mr. Gomes as the dogcatcher.

"No, sir," answered Mary Anne as he left.

Then she spotted a dog.

"Hey, here's one they didn't get. Come here, boy," said Mary Anne as he came to her to lay next to her. "Aww, did they hurt you? They're after you, ain't they? They're after me, too. But don't worry I won't let them get me or you. Everything will be fine for the both of us. If not today, well."

The song started.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne as the song paused.

"Hey, you! Little girl. Come here," said Mr. Lins.

She went to him and said, "Yes, officer?"

"That dog there. Haven't I seen him around here before? Isn't he a stray?" asked Mr. Lins.

"A stray? Oh, no, officer. He's my dog," replied Mary Anne.

"Your dog, huh? So, what's his name?" asked Mr. Lins.

"His name? Oh, his name is, um, Sandy. Yes, that's right, Sandy. I call him Sandy because see, his fur is a nice, sandy color," replied Mary Anne.

"Sandy color, alright. Let's see if Sandy answers his name," said Mr. Lins.

"Answer? You mean when I call him?" asked Mary Anne.

"Right. When you call him by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him," said Mary Anne.

"Call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay," said Mary Anne as she walked away to the center stage and kneeled down. "Sandy. Here, Sandy. Here, boy."

Rocky went to her.

"Good, Sandy. Good old Sandy," said Mary Anne as everyone laughed.

"Maybe he is your dog. But the next time you take him out, I want to see him with the leash and the license otherwise he goes to the pound and they'll put him to sleep. Do you understand?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir, I understand with the leash and license," said Mary Anne.

"Now get on before you catch a cold in this weather," said Mr. Lins.

"Oh, I don't mind the weather," said Mary Anne as the song started up. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended as everyone clapped. Later, it the locket scene.

Mary Anne was behind the curtains outside the near the doors when Mrs. Bleechers goes to Mr. Lins to give him the package from Tiffany and Co.

"Oh, thank you. Where's Annie?" asked Mr. Lins.

"She's writing to her friends," replied Mrs. Bleechers.

"Have Drake get Annie," said Mr. Lins.

"Drake, tell Annie Mr. Warbucks wants to see her," said Mrs. Bleechers.

Mary Anne came in to Mr. Lins two seconds later.

"Hello, Annie, how are you today?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Very well. Thanks," said Mary Anne.

"I'll leave you both alone," said Mrs. Bleechers.

"Mind if we have a talk?" asked Mr. Lins.

"You're not sending me back to the orphanage, are you?" asked Mary Anne.

"Of course not. I became an orphan as a child myself. I was about your age when my parents died. So, from that day on, I became very rich," said Mr. Lins.

"Good idea," commented Mary Anne.

"What's the life without you when you don't have someone to share with? Do you get what I'm saying?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Sure. Kind of. Not really," replied Mary Anne.

"Well, maybe this would explain it better," said Mr. Lins giving her the jewelry box.

When she opened it, it was a new locket.

"Oh, gee. Thank you," said Mary Anne.

"I noticed you've been wearing the old one, so I decided to give you the new....," said Mr. Lins trying to take it off.

"No! I don't want a new one," said Mary Anne getting away.

"Annie, what is it?" asked Mr. Lins.

"When my folks left at the orphanage, they left me with this half-locket along with a note saying they'd come back for me one day. Mr. Warbucks, I love being here, but all I want is to find my parents," said Mary Anne running to Mrs. Bleechers sobbing.

"I'll help you find them. All I need is your locket and the note so the FBI to trace it to your parents," said Mr. Lins.

"Really?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes," smiled Mr. Lins.

She takes off the locket and takes out the note to give them to Mr. Lins.

"Thank you," said Mary Anne.

They sang You Won't Be An Orphan For Long.

"May I go finish writing to my friends to tell them?" asked Mary Anne.

"Sure," said Mr. Lins.

She took off to finish the letter while the reprise of Maybe started.

"Maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe," sang Mary Anne as the song ended.

Everyone clapped while the curtain went down for the intermission. Mary Anne was out putting on a costume for the radio scene for You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile. She was in a sailor dress with the hat with her hair down.

"You were fantastic out there," I commented.

"So are you," said Mary Anne with a smile.

"I bet everyone is going to be interested in you afterwards," I said.

She giggled and said, "Me, too."

Ten minutes later, it was time to start act 2. Then later, Mary Anne and Mr. Lins were at the White House. They were having a meeting about what they can do to help.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom that dollar there'll be sun," sang Mary Anne.

"Quiet, little girl," said Mr. Tillis.

"No, Harold. Go ahead, Annie, it's still a free country," said Mr. Gomes.

The song began as Mary Anne stood on the table.

"Just thinkin' about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne.

"Go ahead, Harold, sing," said Mr. Gomes.

"What?" asked Mr. Tillis.

"Sing," said Mr. Gomes.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom that dollar there'll be sun," sang Mr. Tillis.

"Ikes," said Mr. Gomes.

"Just thinkin' about tomorrow," sang Mrs. Young.

"Clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none," sang Mr. Tillis and Mrs. Young.

"The solo for the president," said Mr. Gomes. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say... everyone, you, too, Oliver, sing."

"The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on til tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day... away!" They all sang as the song ended while the audience applauded.

"Oliver, you have a telegram from Grace saying 800 couples are at the mansion and said to get back right away," said Mr. Gomes.

"Oh, goody," said Mary Anne.

"Let's go, Annie," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay. Thank you. It was nice meeting you, President Roosevelt," said Mary Anne.

"Same here. I'll be seeing you tomorrow anyway," said Mr. Gomes.

They left as the scene changed to the mansion. Mary Anne and Mr. Lins returned from the White House going to Mrs. Bleachers.

"Where are my folks? Are they here?" asked Mary Anne.

"I interviewed all of 800 couples and no one knew about the locket," said Mrs. Bleachers.

"Oh," said Mary Anne.

Mr. Linders as Drake came with the telegram and said, "You got a teleman from the FBI."

"That's about Annie's locket," said Mr. Lins taking it to read. "Between 1918 and 1924, thousands of Annie's lockets were made and sold. FBI said it's impossible to trace your parents through it."

Mr. Lins puts the locket back on Mary Anne.

"Oh," said Mary Anne going to sit.

"I'm very sorry," said Mr. Lins.

"I guess the kids can do okay without parents," said Mary Anne.

Mr. Lins sang Something Was Missing.

"Grace?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir?" asked Mrs. Bleechers.

"Where are the adoption papers?" asked Mr. Lins as he went to Mary Anne. "Annie, I want to adopt you."

"Adopt me?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes. What's your answer?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Well, if I can't have my real mom and dad, I would truly love if you were my father, Mr. Warbucks," said Mary Anne as they hugged.

They talked about the party.

"Annie, I'm the luckiest man in the world," said Mr. Lins.

"And I'm the luckiest kid," said Mary Anne.

The song started.

"Together at last," sang Mr. Lins.

"Together forever," sang Mary Anne.

"We're tying a knot so they never can sever," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

"I don't need sunshine to turn my skies to blue," sang Mary Anne.

"I don't need anything but you," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

"You've wrapped me around that cute little finger. You've made life a song. You've made me the singer," sang Mr. Lins.

"And what's the bathtub tune you always Bu-Bu-Boo?" sang Mary Anne.

"Bu-Bu-Bu anything but you," sang Mr. Lins.

"Yesterday was plain awful," sang Mary Anne.

"You can say that again," sang Mr. Lins.

"Yesterday was plain awful," sang Mary Anne.

"But that's," sang Mr. Lins.

"Not now," sang Mary Anne.

"That's then," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

"I'm as poor as a mouse," sang Mary Anne.

"I'm richer than Midas," sang Mr. Lins.

"But nothing on earth could ever divide us. And if tomorrow, I'm an apple seller, too- I don't need anything but you," sang Mary Anne and Mr. Lins.

Then they took while the servant choir sang Annie. Mr. Lins came down.

"Judge Brandeis," said Grace.

"This is terrific. And now may I present Annie," said Mr. Lins.

Mary Anne came down in the red dress with curly hair as she went to Mr. Lins as they danced.

"They're two of a kind the happiest pair now. Like Fred and Adelle, they're floating on air now. And what's the title of the dream that just come true?" sang the servants.

"I don't need anything," sang Mr. Lins.

"Anything," sang Mary Anne.

"Anything. I don't need anything but... you!" they all sang as the song ended.

The audience clapped. Judge Brandeis was about to start to sign adoption papers when Mr. Linders came by.

"Excuse me, sir, before you start. May I present the Mudges," said Mr. Linders.

Ms. Rosenberg and Mr. Lee came in as the Mudges.

"There is our Annie," said Mr. Lee.

"Who are you?" asked Mary Anne.

"Honey, we're your parents," replied Ms. Rosenberg.

"We're Ralph and Shirley Mudge," said Mr. Lee.

"Annie Mudge?" asked Mr. Lins.

"We loved you very much, but we had to leave you behind. We were offered a job on a farm in Canada," explained Ms. Rosenberg.

"We interview about 800 couples and...," Mrs. Bleechers started.

"I'm assuming you want to see our IDs. Here's our driver's licenses and uh, Annie's birth certificate," said Mr. Lee pretending to give them to Mrs. Bleechers going to Mr. Lins.

"Ann Elizabeth Mudge born in New York City on October 28, 1922," read Mr. Lins.

"Hey, that's my birthday," said Mary Anne.

"And there is one more thing," said Mrs. Bleechers.

"Look, Ralph, she's wearing the locket!" exclaimed Ms. Rosenberg.

"See, when we left Annie at the orphanage, we left her with the half-sliver locket and kept the other half. When we went to the orphanage, a kind lady told us Annie was here," said Mr. Lee as he took out a piece of a locket and it fits just right. "See? Perfect fit."

"I'm glad we found our little girl," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mr. Mudge, what about the money?" asked Mr. Lins.

"What money?" asked Mr. Lee.

"Mr. Warbucks was offering \$50,000 to the couples who can prove that they're Annie's folks," said Mrs. Bleechers.

"I didn't hear that. Plus, we don't need money," said Mr. Lee.

"On the other hand, we can afford to bring Annie up right with the reward money," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mind if Annie stays here until tomorrow so she can spend Christmas with us? So, you can pick her up along with the check," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, alright, it's fine by us, sir," said Mr. Lee.

"Bye, Annie, dear," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Until tomorrow morning, and then you would be living with us for good," said Mr. Lee as they left when he bumped into Mrs. Bleechers. "Sorry, ma'am."

Mary Anne looked up at Mr. Lins and said, "This is wonderful news. Let's go share with it with the guests."

She went to the center of the stage with her head down and looks up looking pale.

"Drake, champagne," said Mr. Lins.

"Of course, sir," said Mr. Linders.

"We should celebrate. We just got good news tonight. Annie has found her parents. I propose a toast," said Mr. Lins raising Mary Anne looks up. "Here's to Annie Mudge."

"To Annie Mudge," said the rest.

Mary Anne looks again and took off to upstairs while Mrs. Bleechers follows Mary Anne halfway.

"Annie," said Mrs. Bleechers to Mr. Lins. "Sir, I'm sure I've seen that Mr. Mudge before, but I'm not sure where and he's not who he says."

"We'll not give her until we are certain they're not her real mom and dad," said Mr. Lins. "I'll go straight to the top to the President of the United States."

The scene changed to Christmas morning with Mary Anne came down with the suitcase while wearing the blue dress with a yellow bow and sat on the steps as the song started.

"Silly to cry. Nothing to fear. Betcha where they lived is nice as right here. Betcha my life is gonna be swell. Just looking at them, it's easy to tell. And maybe I'll forget how nice he was to me and how I was almost his baby. Maybe," sang Mary Anne as the song ended.

Mr. Lins and Mrs. Bleechers came noticing Mary Anne.

"Merry Christmas, Annie," said Mr. Lins and Mrs. Bleechers.

"Merry Christmas," said Mary Anne.

"You're up early," said Mr. Lins as he and Mrs. Bleechers sat beside her.

"My parents are coming from New Jersey," said Mary Anne. "You're up early, too."

"We've been up all night with the president," said Mr. Lins.

"You mean he's here?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes," said Mr. Lins.

Then Mr. Lee and Ms. Rosenberg came.

"Hello, Annie, Merry Christmas," said Mr. Lee.

"Here's for the check of \$50,000," said Mrs. Bleechers.

When they got that, it read, "The jig is up."

Mary Anne got puzzled. Then Mr. Gomes came out.

"Well, it's the Mudges. We learned that those were the pen names of Daniel Hannigan known as Rooster & Danny the Dip and Lily St. Regis," said Mr. Gomes.

That was when Mrs. Boyd came with the orphans.

"Merry Christmas," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Merry Christmas," said Mary Anne going to them.

"Well, it's Agatha Hannigan known as Aggie," said Mr. Gomes.

"She helped us out," said Mr. Lee.

"What?" asked Mary Anne.

"So, you're just pretending to be Annie's parents for the reward money?" asked Mrs. Bleachers.

"Uh, Annie, save me," said Mrs. Boyd going to Mary Anne. "Tell these people I've been good to you."

"I wish I could, Miss Hannigan, but except for one thing, you always taught me never tell a lie," said Mary Anne.

"Your days are numbered," Mallory mocking Mrs. Boyd.

The FBI took Mr. Lee, Mrs. Boyd, and Ms. Rosenberg away. Mary Anne went to them.

"Miss Hannigan is gone for good," said Mary Anne.

"And Annie, I have some news for you. The FBI was able to trace the handwriting from your note," said Mr. Gomes as Mary Anne turned to him. "And your parents are David and Maragret Bennett."

"The Bennetts are my real mom and dad?" asked Mary Anne as he nodded. "Where are they?"

"Annie," said Mr. Lins as she turns to him. "They passed away a long time ago."

"You mean they're in heaven?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid so," replied Mr. Gomes.

"So, I'm an orphan after all," said Mary Anne as she had her head down walking towards to the center.

"Annie, are you alright?" asked Mrs. Bleachers walking halfway while Mary Anne stopped.

"Yeah. I think so," said Mary Anne as she turned slowly. "See, I always my folks loved me and they'd come back for me if they were alive."

"Would you still like to be Annie Bennett Warbucks?" asked Mr. Lins.

"I still like that very much," smiled Mary Anne.

"I love you," said Mr. Lins.

"And I love you more, Daddy Warbucks," said Mary Anne as they hugged.

Mary Anne introduces us to Mr. Lins and everyone else. Then they sang A New Deal For Christmas. That was the end of the play and we all bowed as everyone clapped. We went out front.

"You were fantastic, Mary Anne," said Patti.

"Thank you," said Mary Anne.

"You certainly did proved Cokie wrong," said Patti.

"I know I did," agreed Mary Anne who was laughing.

"I bet you will for the entire time," said Patti.

"Me, too," said Mary Anne. "I can hardly wait until the whole weekend."

"I bet that would be very exciting," said Patti.

"You bet it would be," said Kathi.

Then we changed into our regular clothes after we did some autographs. Mary Anne was famous. Between you and me, she signed the most autographs than any of us. We didn't care though. We were all happy for her.

"I told you everyone would be interested in you," I said.

"I know you did. I knew it right away," said Mary Anne. "Next step is the Tony Awards, the movie, and the soundtrack."

"I agree with you on that," said Kristy.

21 - Claudia IV

After school, at home, I was watching a movie when the doorbell rang and got up to answer. It was April. She's early. Isn't she supposed to be at Mary Anne's?

"You're early," I said.

"I just moved back here actually. I didn't go to school in Maine because we left this morning at around seven or eight. I wanted to surprise Mary Anne," said April.

"You did?" I asked. "Where do you live now?"

"Not far from you. Over on Fawcett Street," replied April.

"No kidding. That's where Jessi lives!" I exclaimed. "Stacey used to live there until eighth grade when she had to move back to New York City before her parents got divorced."

"Isn't that funny? I live next door to Mrs. Savannah Morrison and she's very nice. I even met her husband and three kids," said April.

"Are you here with your family?" I asked.

"No. My parents just got divorced. I didn't tell Mary Anne I was moving back here since I was planning to surprise her," said April.

"That's awful to hear," I said.

"I know," said April. "I'm the only one here with Mom because both of my sisters want to stay in Maine with Dad because they love it there."

"Oh, are you upset about the family splitting apart?" I asked.

"A little," said April.

"Dawn's the same way. So she would know how you're feeling about it. Jeff was here until he moved back to California because he was too miserable here," I said.

"That's true," said April. "I just wish my folks wouldn't divorce at all."

"This is nice though since you, Mary Anne, Kristy, and I would be together again everyday now," I said.

"At least that would make me better. That's why I wanted to be back because I wanted to see you all again," said April.

"We must have read each other's minds or something," I said as we laughed. "Do you want to stay here to surprise Mary Anne and Kristy at the same time?"

"Good idea," replied April. "Did I forget to mention to surprise Kristy?"

"You did," I answered.

"Opps," said April.

"That's okay," I said. "We performed the play of Annie at our school today."

"Really? How was it?" asked April.

"It was fun. Mary Anne did ended up proving Cokie wrong that she wasn't too nervous to memorize a thing since we've been rehearsing all this time and when she didn't use the script at all," I replied.

"That's a good thing," said April as I agreed on that.

"I can't wait for the weekend now," I said.

"I bet. I can't wait to watch you perform on Tony Awards and watching making the movie," said April.

Later, at the meeting, April was downstairs while waiting for both Mary Anne and Kristy, who are on their way together, to arrive. They were at Mary Anne's. Their plan was to walk here today for a change since it was a nice day out. Dawn is with them of course. When they arrived, Mary Anne nearly went by April.

"April?" asked Mary Anne.

"Mary Anne," said April as they hugged.

"What are you doing here?" asked Kristy.

"I live here now," replied April.

"You do?" asked Mary Anne excitedly.

"Yes. I live on Fawcett Street," said April.

"No way!" exclaimed Jessi. "Awesome."

"How far do you live from Jessi's?" asked Kristy.

"Just down the street and next door to the Morrisons," replied April.

"I know who they are. Savannah's my godmother from my mother's side. They were best friends from college," said Mary Anne.

"Really?" asked April as Mary Anne nodded.

"I haven't seen them since I was ten or eleven," said Mary Anne.

"Wow," said April. "That's so cool."

"I know where they live, so it would be easy to find your house," said Mary Anne as they giggled.

"At least I'd still spend the New York City trip weekend with you," said April.

"That's true," smiled Mary Anne. "This is a nice surprise that you moved here."

"Yeah. My parents just got divorced and I moved here with my mom while my sisters and Dad stayed in Portland since they all enjoyed living there," said April.

"Sorry to hear that," said Mary Anne.

"Thanks. My parents have been fighting a lot," said April.

"I know how that feels," said Stacey who had just arrived. "All the fighting upsets me, too."

"It was upsetting me and my sisters as well. I'm glad they're not together anymore so they can get along better," said April.

"That's true," said Dawn. "My mom still gets along with my dad."

"Depends on the relationships. They would still fight afterwards," said Stacey.

"I hope my parents would get along," said April. "I got a feeling it might take awhile for me to get used to it."

"It took me awhile," said Stacey.

"Me, too," said Dawn.

"I was too upset to go to school when my parents were getting divorced when I was younger. Even though I never hear from my dad, I still love him and miss him a lot," said Kristy. "I wish I could see him no matter what happens."

At the meeting, we decided to let April join the club.

"You can be a new member of the club," said Mary Anne.

"I would like that very much," smiled April. "Thank you."

"What can she be?" asked Claudia.

"Well, I'm good at math. I always get A plusses," said April.

"Want to be the vice-treasurer? I'm not good at math at all," said Dawn.

"Okay. Fine with me," said April.

"We're all set then. Want to baby-sit for Derek with me on Monday night to be trained?" asked Mary Anne.

"Sounds good," replied April.

"She can help with Mallory's siblings at night as well," said Kristy.

"Good idea," said Mary Anne.

"I agree," said April. "Especially with seven younger siblings."

We all laughed at that. On Friday, it was the big day to leave for New York City. One of our parents get to come along. So, Mr. Spier would be with Mary Anne. We're all excited especially Mary Anne since she'd be performing on Tony Awards later on tonight. She doesn't seem to be nervous at all and I don't think she would ever be nervous. I bet she'd do really good tonight. That night, Mary Anne was backstage with Rocky waiting to perform since Tony Awards is about to begin. She already found out she'd be the first one to perform and is already excited about it.

When it was time, we heard an announcement for the Tomorrow scene. Mr. Lins, who the police costume, was on stage to announce that. Mary Anne was sitting on stage with her costume with Rocky.

"Aww, did they hurt you? They're after you, ain't they? They're after me, too. But don't worry I won't let them get me or you. Everything will be fine for the both of us. If not today, well," said Mary Anne as the song started. "The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun.

Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow til there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say, oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," sang Mary Anne as the song paused.

"Hey, you! Little girl. Come here," said Mr. Lins.

She went to him and said, "Yes, officer?"

"That dog there. Haven't I seen him around here before? Isn't he a stray?" asked Mr. Lins.

"A stray? Oh, no, officer. He's my dog," replied Mary Anne.

"Your dog, huh? So, what's his name?" asked Mr. Lins.

"His name? Oh, his name is, um, Sandy. Yes, that's right, Sandy. I call him Sandy because see, his fur

is a nice, sandy color," replied Mary Anne.

"Sandy color, alright. Let's see if Sandy answers his name," said Mr. Lins.

"Answer? You mean when I call him?" asked Mary Anne.

"Right. When you call him by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him," said Mary Anne.

"Call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Okay," said Mary Anne as she walked away to the center stage and kneeled down. "Sandy. Here, Sandy. Here, boy."

Rocky went to her as the audience applauded.

"Good, Sandy. Good old Sandy," said Mary Anne as everyone laughed.

"Maybe he is your dog. But the next time you take him out, I want to see him with the leash and the license otherwise he goes to the pound and they'll put him to sleep. Do you understand?" asked Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir, I understand with the leash and license," said Mary Anne.

"Now get on before you catch a cold in this weather," said Mr. Lins.

"Oh, I don't mind the weather," said Mary Anne as the song started up. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended as everyone clapped. You know what something else? Thanks to Mary Anne's best acting skills, we won some awards. That was the best night we would never forget especially Mary Anne who was more thrilled than anyone. Mr. Spier was very proud of her, too. We each had about five of them. We should've had more, but Mary Anne didn't care.

"It doesn't matter if we win five or less, we're lucky to win anything," said Mary Anne.

"You're right," said Stacey.

None of us cared either anyway.

"Next stop is the movie," said Mary Anne as we laughed.

"Are we using the same lines as the play version?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Mr. Jackson.

"Fine by me," said Mary Anne.

"Only Annie would be at the window in the movie, not the plays," said the director.

"Okay," said Mary Anne. "One of my clients has one of the Annie movies from 1980's with Alieen Quinn. That's the only Annie movie that has the kidnapping and the train bridge at the end."

"That's right," said Mr. Jackson.

"Plus that movie is the summer one instead of Christmas," added Mary Anne.

Isn't she smart to remember all that?

"That's the only Annie movie I saw," said Mary Anne.

"You are so smart to remember stuff like that," I said.

"I know," agreed Mary Anne as we all laughed.

"Also, this movie we're making doesn't have the White House scene. Annie runs upstairs when Grace follows and the one who sang both reprises of Maybe and Tomorrow instead of Annie singing it on Christmas morning. Plus, Annie doesn't cry in the locket scene if it was an option," said the director.

"Okay," said Mary Anne. "I never saw the one with Alicia Morton, so I don't that one or Alieen Quinn verison. The only Annie movie I have is the play version copy that April sent me."

"I have those copies," said the director. "I was planning to give it to you."

"Just for me?" asked Mary Anne who was excited.

"Yeah," said Mr. Jackson.

"Wow. Thank you," said Mary Anne. "The others should also get both of them to be fair enough."

"The ones I got for you are for free. The rest can get them at the movie for half-free since they're the cast members, too," said Mr. Jackson.

"Awesome!" exclaimed Mary Anne.

At the plaza, Mary Anne puts the Alicia Morton in right away so she would know what to do. We weren't doing the movie until the afternoon anyway, which would be after lunch. She, Kristy, Stacey, Mallory, Jessi, Dawn-who joined-, and I shared a room together. April gets to join, too since she was the guest. Mr. Spier is with us, too. The rest of our parents are next door.

"I bet you would know those three parts in a heartbeat," I said.

"Me, too," said Mary Anne with a smile.

22 - Mary Anne VIII

The next day, it was the big day to make that movie of Annie and I'm still very excited. I'm not even nervous since I know I'd do great like I always have been during all of the rehearsals and the first performance the other day. We're due to start doing it later this afternoon. They're going to make it dark when the movie starts using the camera. They're also using machines to make it snow. After lunch, we get to have our hair ready in the barbershop for free! Then we get to have our make-up done and change into our costumes. I know we're going to have a fun time making it. Then we were all ready to get the movie started. We were told we can either use the same lines or use it differently for the movie only.

We were at the orphanage on the set. We were all in there.

"Get ready on the set. Lights! Camera! Action!" announced Mr. Jackson.

The movie started when I sat at the window and it was snowing at three am. I was looking out of it.

"Mama! Mama! Mommy!" called Mallory out.

"Shut up," said Marci.

"Can't anyone get any sleep around here?" asked Cokie.

"Mama! Mommy!" continued Mallory.

"I said shut your trap, Molly," said Marci as she pushed Mal off the bed.

"Don't push that poor kid. She did nothing to you," said Claudia.

"She's keeping me awake, ain't she?" asked Marci.

"No, you're keeping us awake," said Claudia.

"Wanna make something out of it?" asked Marci.

They started fighting as I noticed and walked away from the window.

"Oh, my goodness. They're fighting," said Jessi.

I got on the bed.

"Pipe down! All of you! Go back to sleep!" I said with my hands on my hips as I got off the bed to Mallory. "It's okay, Molly, Annie's here."

"It was my mama, Annie. We were riding on the ferry boat. She was holding me up to see all the big ships. And then, she just walked away and I couldn't find her no more. Anywhere," said Mallory.

"It was only a dream, honey. You have to get back to sleep now. It's after three o'clock in the morning," I said.

"Annie, read me your note," said Mallory.

"My note? Again?" I asked.

"Please?" asked Mallory.

"Sure, Molly," I replied as I took it out.

"Uh-oh. Here it comes again," said Marci.

Mallory and I got on the bed.

"Please take good care of our little darling. Her name is Annie. She was born on...", I started.

"She was born on October 28. We'll be back to get her soon," interrupted Cokie.

"We have left a half-sliver locket around her neck and kept the other half," Marci joined in.

"So, that when we come back for her, you will know she's our baby," said the rest except Mallory, Claud, and Jessi.

They were laughing.

"And now they're laughing," said Jessi.

I folded my fold and turned to Marci.

"Alright. Do you want to sleep with your teeth inside your mouth or out?" I asked angrily as I sat down with Mallory to cover her.

"You're very lucky, Annie. I wish my parents are alive, but you really have them," said Mallory.

"I know. Somewhere," I said as the song began. "Maybe far away or maybe real nearby. He may be pouring her coffee. She may be straightening his tie. Maybe in a house, all hidden by a hill. She's sitting playing piano. He's sitting paying a bill. Betcha they're young, betcha they're smart. Bet they collect things like ashtrays and art. Betcha they're good. Why shouldn't they be? Their one mistake was giving up me. So, maybe now it's time and maybe when I wake. They'll be calling me baby. Maybe."

The song continued as I looked down noticing Mal was asleep while I got off the bed and lied her down as I covered her some more while I took off to the window.

"Betcha he reads, betcha she sews. Maybe she's made me a closet of clothes. Maybe they're strict as straight as they're mine. So, maybe now this prayer's the last one of its kind. Won't you please come get your baby? Maybe," I sang as it ended while I sat on the window.

The clock chimed to four and took off to the bed as I packed some stuff in the bag.

Marci woke up and said, "Now what?"

"Since my parents never came for me, so I'm going to find them," I replied.

"Again?" asked Marci.

I got up and said, "Pepper, watch out for Molly."

"But Miss Hannigan is going to catch you and hit you with the paddle again," warned Jessi.

"I don't care. I'm getting out of it," I said as I took off.

Out there, I sneaked down the stairs and then, walked to the door. When I unlocked it and opened it, a hand shut the door noticing it was Mrs. Boyd.

"I caught you. I always seem to hear you. Turn around," said Mrs. Boyd as I stood still. "I said turn around."

I turned as she hits me with the paddle and took me by the shoulder.

"Now what do you say?" asked Mrs. Boyd as I remained silent. "What...do...you...say?"

"I love you, Miss Hannigan," I replied.

"Rotten orphan," said Mrs. Boyd as she pushed me while we headed up the stairs.

"I'm not an orphan. My folks left me with a note saying they love me and they'd come back for me," I said.

Mrs. Boyd laughed and said, "That was 1922. This is 1933. You are an orphan."

In the room, she whistled and turned on the light.

"Everyone, get up!" said Mrs. Boyd.

They did while she went to me.

"Annie was trying to escape again. So, you're all going to scrub the floor and strip the beds for the laundry man," said Mrs. Boyd.

"But it's four o'clock in the morning," complained Jessi.

"I know. Then you get down on your knees and clean this dump until it shines like the top of Chrysler Building," said Mrs. Boyd. "Now get to work."

"Yes, Miss Hannigan," we said.

"Now," said Mrs. Boyd.

She leaves while the song started and started cleaning.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us," we sang.

"Instead of treated," I sang.

"We get tricked," we sang.

"Instead of kisses," I sang.

"We get kicked. It's the hard-knock life," we sang. "We got no folks to speak of, so it's the hard-knock role we hoe."

"Cotton blankets," I sang.

"Instead of wool," we sang.

"Empty bellies," I sang.

"Instead of full, it's the hard-knock life," we sang.

"Don't it feel like the wind is always howling?" I sang.

"Don't it seem there's never any light?" sang Claudia and Kristy.

"Once a day, don't you wanna throw the towel in?" sang Mallory and Jessi.

"It's easier than putting up a fight," sang Marci and Cokie.

"No one's there when your dreams at night get creepy, no one cares if you grow or if you shrink, no one dries your eyes when they get weepy," I sang.

"From the crying you think this place's sink. Oh!" we sang. "Empty-bellies life, rotten-smelly life, full-of-sorrow life, no-tomorrow life."

"Santa Claus we never see," sang Mallory.

"Santa Claus, what's that? Who's he?" I sang.

"No one cares for you a smidge when you're in the orphanage," we sang.

"You'll stay up till this dump shines like the top of the Chrysler Building," said Mallory pretending to be Miss Hannigan.

"Yank the whiskers from her chin. Jab her with a safety pin. Make her drink a mickey finn," we sang. "I love you, Miss Hannigan."

"Get to work now! Strip the beds! I said get to work!" said Mallory.

"It's the hard-knock life for us, it's the hard-knock life for us. No one cares for you a smidge when you're in an orphanage. It's the hard-knock life, it's the hard-knock life, it's...the...hard-knock...life!" we sang as the song ended.

Later, I was outside after I escaped by getting into the laundry basket. It was snowing again.

"Excuse me, I'm searching for my folks. Pardon me, have you seen anyone who's just like me? Sir," I said.

"Apples for sell, apples for sell," said Mrs. Young as I ran over.

"Yum. I love apples," I said.

"Care to have one? It's free," said Mrs. Young.

"Thank you, ma'am," I said getting one as I continued on.

"Have you seen any stray dogs around?" asked Mr. Gomes.

"No, sir, I haven't," I replied as I went to sit near the boxes.

Then I spotted a dog.

"Here's one they didn't catch. Come here," I said as he came to lay with me. "What's the matter? Are they after you? They're after me, too. But don't you worry. I won't let them get me or you. Everything will be fine for the both of us. They just got to."

The song started.

"The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinkin' about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow till there's none. When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh. The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away," I sang as the song paused while Mr. Lins came by.

"Excuse me, young lady," said Mr. Lins.

"What's the problem, officer?" I asked.

"Isn't he a stray dog that I've seen before?" asked Mr. Lins.

"He's not a stray, he's my dog," I replied.

"Oh, really? What's his name then?" asked the officer.

"His name? Oh, right. His name is...", I said looking at him. "Sandy. Yes, that's it, Sandy. I call him Sandy because you see, his fur is a nice, sandy color."

"Okay. Let's see if he answers when you call him," said Mr. Lins.

"Call him?" I asked.

"Yes, by his name, Sandy," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, you see, officer, I just got him and...", I started.

"Just call him," said the officer.

I walked by an inch as I kneeled down.

"Sandy. Here, Sandy. Come on, boy," I called to him as he did answered his name by going to me.

"Good job, Sandy. Good old Sandy."

"Maybe he does belong to you, but you better have him on the leash and license or he will go to the dog pound so they can put him to sleep," said Mr. Lins.

"Yes, sir. I understand," I said.

"Now, get home before you could catch a cold," said Mr. Lins.

"The weather doesn't bother me," I said as Rocky and I started walking while the song went for another tone. "When I'm stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, I just stick out my chin and grin and say...oh! The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Come what may! Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away!"

The song ended. Later, it was the adoption party.

Judge Brandeis was about to start to sign adoption papers when Mr. Linders came to Mr. Lins.

"Excuse me, sir, before you start. May I present the Mudges," said Mr. Linders.

Ms. Rosenberg and Mr. Lee came in as the Mudges.

"There is our Annie," said Mr. Lee.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Honey, we're your parents," replied Ms. Rosenberg.

"We're Ralph and Shirley Mudge," said Mr. Lee.

"Annie Mudge?" asked Mr. Lins. "Let's do this in private."

In the room, I was sitting in a chair in front of the desk while Ms. Rosenberg was sitting in the other chair.

"We loved you very much, but we had to leave you behind. We were offered a job on a farm in Canada," explained Ms. Rosenberg.

"We interview about 800 couples and...," Mrs. Bleachers started.

"I'm assuming you want to see our IDs. Here's our driver's licenses and uh, Annie's birth certificate," said Mr. Lee as he gives them to Mrs. Bleachers going to Mr. Lins.

"Ann Elizabeth Mudge born in New York City on October 28, 1922," read Mr. Lins.

"Hey, that's my birthday," I said.

"And there is one more thing," said Mrs. Bleachers.

"Look, Ralph, she's wearing the locket!" exclaimed Ms. Rosenberg.

"See, when we left Annie at the orphanage, we left her with the half-silver locket and kept the other half. When we went to the orphanage, a kind lady told us Annie was here," said Mr. Lee as he took out a piece of a locket and it fits just right. "See? Perfect fit."

"I'm glad we found our little girl," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mr. Mudge, what about the money?" asked Mr. Lins.

"What money?" asked Mr. Lee.

"Mr. Warbucks was offering \$50,000 to the couples who can prove that they're Annie's folks," said Mrs. Bleachers.

"I didn't hear that. Plus, we don't need money," said Mr. Lee.

"On the other hand, we can afford to bring Annie up right with the reward money," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Mind if Annie stays here until tomorrow so she can spend Christmas with us? So, you can pick her up along with the check," said Mr. Lins.

"Well, alright, it's fine by us, sir," said Mr. Lee.

"Bye, Annie, dear," said Ms. Rosenberg.

"Until tomorrow morning, and then you would be living with us for good," said Mr. Lee as they left when he bumped into Mrs. Bleachers. "Sorry, ma'am."

I looked up at Mr. Lins and said, "This is wonderful news. Let's go share with it with the guests."

We went out while I had my head down. Out there, I got on the steps as I looked pale while looking up.

"Drake, champagne," said Mr. Lins.

"Of course, sir," said Mr. Linders.

"We should celebrate. We just got good news tonight. Annie has found her parents. I propose a toast," said Mr. Lins raising I looked up. "Here's to Annie Mudge."

"To Annie Mudge," said the rest.

I looked again and ran upstairs while Mrs. Bleachers followed me up there. In the room, she entered when she saw me on the windowseat facing the window as the song started.

"Silly to cry. Nothing to fear. Betcha where they lived is nice as right here. Betcha my life is gonna be swell. Just looking at them, it's easy to tell," sang Mrs. Bleachers sitting next to me while I was sobbing and the song continued. "The sun'll come out tomorrow bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow there'll be sun. Just thinking about tomorrow clears away the cobwebs and the sorrow till there's none."

I had looked at her and then, I turned back to the window and cried while she was stroking my curls.

"When you're stuck with a day that's gray and lonely, you just stick out your chin and grin and say," sang Mrs. Bleachers as I sat up on my knees breathing heavily and I looked down as she held my chin. "The sun'll come out tomorrow so you gotta hang on till tomorrow. Come what may. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day away. Tomorrow, tomorrow I love ya tomorrow you're always a day...away."

The song ended while she had my head near her shoulder as I had my arms around her while I continued crying. The scene changed to the following day while Ms. Rosenberg and Mr. Lee were coming out to get me. At the mansion, I came down with my coat and suitcase and sat down along with Rocky while Mr. Lins and Mrs. Bleachers came out from the den.

"Merry Christmas, Annie," said Mr. Lins.

"Merry Christmas, Annie," said Mrs. Bleachers.

"Merry Christmas," I said.

"Did you see if Santa had left you anything under the Christmas tree?" asked Mr. Lins.

"No. My parents are my gifts, that's plenty. Do you think I still could keep Sandy and come back to visit you and Grace?" I asked.

"I'm sure," said Mr. Lins as he and Mrs. Bleechers joined me.

"You look tired this morning," I said.

"We've been up all night with the president," said Mr. Lins.

"You mean he's here?" I asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Lins.

Then Mr. Lee and Ms. Rosenberg came.

"Hello, Annie, Merry Christmas," said Mr. Lee.

"Here's for the check of \$50,000," said Mrs. Bleechers.

When they got that, it read, "The jig is up."

I got puzzled. Then Mr. Gomes came out.

"Well, it's the Mudges. We learned that those were the pen names of Daniel Hannigan known as Rooster & Danny the Dip and Lily St. Regis," said Mr. Gomes.

That was when Mrs. Boyd came with the other girls.

"Merry Christmas," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Merry Christmas," I said going to them.

"Well, it's Agatha Hannigan known as Aggie," said Mr. Gomes.

"She helped us out," said Mr. Lee.

"What?" I asked.

"So, you're just pretending to be Annie's parents for the reward money?" asked Mrs. Bleechers.

"Uh, Annie, save me," said Mrs. Boyd going to me. "Tell these people I've been good to you."

"Sorry, Miss Hannigan, I wish I could say that, but except for one thing, you always taught me never tell a lie," I said.

"Your days are numbered," Mallory mocking Mrs. Boyd.

The FBI took Mr. Lee, Mrs. Boyd, and Ms. Rosenberg away. I went to the girls.

"Miss Hannigan is gone for good," I said.

"And Annie, I have some news for you. The FBI was able to trace the handwriting from your note," said Mr. Gomes as I turned to him. "And your parents are David and Maragret Bennett."

"The Bennetts are my real mom and dad?" I asked as he nodded. "Where are they?"

"Annie," said Mr. Lins as I turned to him. "They passed away a long time ago."

"You mean they're in heaven?" I asked.

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid so," replied Mr. Gomes.

"So, I'm an orphan after all," I said as I had my head down walking towards to the stairs.

"Annie, are you alright?" asked Mrs. Bleachers walking up to me while I stopped.

"Yeah. I think so," I said as I turned slowly. "See, I always knew my folks loved me and they'd come back for me if they were alive."

"Would you still like to be Annie Bennett Warbucks?" asked Mr. Lins.

"I still like that very much," I smiled.

"I love you," said Mr. Lins.

"And I love you more, Daddy Warbucks," I said we hugged.

We did a finale of I Don't Need Anything But You while I had a new locket. The song had ended when the director announced, "Cut!"

Mr. Jackson smiled at us and said, "You all did an amazing job. Especially you, Mary Anne."

"Thanks," I smiled.

"Last step is to record the soundtrack in Hollywood," said Mr. Jackson.

Now, that's going to be even more exciting than ever. That's what we did the following day. We were there by one. We just had lunch on the plane. We started at one-thirty and guess what, we were done by three. We were able to take the six pm flight and we were back in New York at eleven, so we ended up staying at the plaza for the night since it was one in New York City time. We get to sleep late the following day and we went home at eleven in the morning and we were back at Stoneybrook an hour

later. Yes, we did get excused from school until tomorrow. We had a fun weekend.

"Which weekend you like best?" asked Dad.

"To be honest with you, I liked the whole weekend," I replied as I laughed.

"Just think, you'd be starting the school performances this Thursday starting at Stoneybrook Middle School," said Dad.

"I know. It's hard to believe," I said.

23 - Dawn IV

On Thursday, it was the big night to start our play! All of the girls were excited. Mary Anne is also thrilled.

"I can't believe the day is finally here!" exclaimed Mary Anne.

"And what about me? When am I going to take over for an older orphan?" I asked.

"You will soon. Don't worry," said Mary Anne. "The National Tour is taking place all year until December."

"I pray I'd take over someday," I said.

"The play isn't going anywhere," said Mary Anne.

"If I don't, I will quit," I said.

"Then, you'd lose your chance," said Mary Anne. "It takes patience. Say Kathi gets to play Annie while I was the understudy, do you think I'd complain about it instead of waiting my turn? Of course not. I wouldn't mind waiting at all."

"But you would quit," I said.

"No I wouldn't," said Mary Anne. "If I did, I would lose my chance to take over. The subject is closed. I'm not letting you to spoil my excitement about tonight. I still say I'm glad the day arrived at last. No matter what."

That was when Mary Anne got up, grabbed her stuff, and left for school without waiting for me. How rude is that! Even Mom and Richard didn't notice that. That was unfair! They probably didn't blame her for doing that. At school, in homeroom, I came in and sat with Mary Anne.

"You left without me," I said.

"Can we talk about this later?" asked Mary Anne.

"No, now," I replied.

"Just leave me alone. Don't try to spoil my day already," said Mary Anne.

The bell rang to start a new short takes. Kristy and Mary Anne has a sewing class together while I have a math class. I hate math. Thank god Stacey the math whiz with me in case I need her help. It's called calculus. I don't know a thing about it, but Stacey is thrilled since math is her best subject. The day went by at lunch when I went straight to Mary Anne.

"Listen here, siblings don't leave without each other when they attend the same school," I said.

"They don't spoil each other's day either," said my sister without looking at me.

Then, she left going to lunch. What a grouch she is. Marci and Patti came by.

"Why are you trying to ruin her day for?" asked Marci.

"Yeah, she's been waiting for this big night to arrive," added Patti.

Since when Marci stands up for Mary Anne? That was unusual. At lunch, Marci came to Mary Anne.

"Mind if I sit here with you?" asked Marci.

Mary Anne looked up and said, "I don't mind."

"I noticed Dawn nearly ruin your excitement," said Marci as she sat with my sister.

"I know, she is," said Mary Anne. "This is a nice surprise. You never sit with me before."

"I figured I'd sit with the star of the play," said Marci.

"Wow. Thanks," said my sister with a grin.

"No problem. If I promise to be nice for now on after the play, can we be friends?" asked Marci.

"On one condition, don't try to steal Logan from me, even though I haven't you doing it anymore," said Mary Anne.

"It's a deal," replied Marci as they giggled.

"Maybe I'd help you change to be a better person," said Mary Anne.

"I think you already have since we started rehearsing when I commented your singing and acting skills," said Marci.

"I did?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yes," said Marci.

"I never knew that," said Mary Anne. "You do act like Pepper and sing perfectly."

"Thanks," said Marci.

"My favorite part was when you said, here it comes and you screamed," said Mary Anne as they laughed.

"I like that part, too," said Marci.

Marci and Mary Anne being friends? I can't picture that immature girl being with our mature one. I would like to see what Richard would say about this. He hates any kids who might be too immature for us to hang out with. He thinks one of us might change and be like them and he might be right on that. After lunch, Mary Anne and Marci headed out together for the first time.

"Did you see that? Marci was with Mary Anne," I said.

"Big deal. Marci's changing to be a nice one now. Mary Anne didn't realize that she was the one who changed Marci," said Kristy.

"But you know Richard is going to kill her once he hears about this," I added.

"Mary Anne would tell him the same thing," said Kristy.

"But I doubt he'd listen to her," I said.

"I'm sure he will," said Kristy.

"I don't want to see her to get hurt," I said.

"Look who's talking. Who's been hurting her most of the time? You. You did try to spoil her big evening earlier. I know. She told me everything," said Kristy. "If you don't want her to get hurt, don't upset her anymore."

After school, I warned Mary Anne that her father might have a fit if he learns she's starting hanging out with the most immature girl in school.

"No he won't," said Mary Anne. "I'm sure as long as Marci is beginning to be nice, he'll understand."

"You know he hates any kids who are much too immature to hang out with us," I told her.

She gave me the Look and walked away.

"If he did, don't say I didn't warn you," I said.

Later, at home, Mary Anne had decided to keep Marci as a secret from Richard for time being. Oh, boy, she'd be in big trouble for that one. That's what I told her.

"You shouldn't do that from your own father," I said.

"It's only for being time," said Mary Anne. "I'm not planning to bring her for now anyway. I'll be seeing her at school."

"But what if he asked you how long you've been with her?" I asked.

"I'll just say I just hanging out with her," replied my sister.

"Wouldn't that be a lie?" I asked.

"No," replied Mary Anne.

At dinner, Richard said, "How was school?"

"Good. I started the sewing class for short takes today. I have Kristy again," replied Mary Anne.

"And I have calculus for math," I added. "Thank god Stacey's with me because I don't know a thing about it."

"That's good," said Richard.

"I know. We're going to start the sewing machine and maybe I could ask Mrs. Towne to show me how to use it because it would be my first time to start using sewing machines," said Mary Anne.

"That's a good idea," agreed my stepfather.

Mrs. Towne lives down the road from us. She has a son, Carl, who lives in Missouri.

"I should call her tonight to ask her," said Mary Anne.

After dinner, that's what she did and they get to do it tomorrow before her second night of performance. We left at seven since the play would begin at eight tonight, tomorrow, and Saturday & the maintee is on Sunday at two in the afternoon. Richard and Mom went to get their tickets from the door while Mary Anne went backstage to get ready. When the play came, Mary Anne still did her lines and songs perfectly without leaving any of it out. After the play ended at ten, Mary Anne came out front where Mom and Richard were waiting.

"You did wonderful, sweetheart," said Richard.

"Thank you," smiled Mary Anne.

"You were more than wonderul. Make that super," said Mom.

They all laughed as Cokie's mother came by.

"May I take your picture, Mary Anne? You were amazing," said Mrs. Mason.

That's what she did and decided to have me included to be fair enough-thank goodness.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Mason.

Then Mary Anne went to go change back in her regular clothes when Marci met Mary Anne after that.

"You totally rock," said Marci.

"Why, totally thank you," said Mary Anne as they giggled. "I have to get home now. See you tomorrow."

Later, when we got home, we had to get ready for bed since it was a school night. Mary Anne went to her father happily.

"I can't wait to do it again tomorrow night," said Mary Anne.

"I bet," smiled her father. "Night, sweetheart."

"Night, Daddy," said Mary Anne as she heads off to bed.

24 - Kristy V

The next day, Dawn was after Mary Anne thinking something would happen by Marci. Since Marci has changed, I don't think nothing would happen, so I'm not worried about that.

"Would you worried if Mary Anne might be in trouble not telling Richard about it? He forbids anyone who is too immature to hang out with me or Mary Anne," said Dawn.

"I'm sure she will tell him," I said.

"But she's keeping Marci as a secret and that's not good," said Dawn.

"Dawn, let Mary Anne handle it on her own. How old do you think she is? She's 13, not a toddler," I said.

"I know that," said Dawn.

"Okay, than. Just let her tell him in her own way," I said.

For the next few nights-including the Sunday maintee show-, you should see how excellent Mary Anne performs her lines and songs! I bet she'd still be like that on the National Tour, which we'd be starting with the schools next Thursday night at Stoneybrook High School. We're not doing every state yet until the school year ends and we'd be doing that Thursday through Sunday when school starts up again.

Mary Anne could hardly wait to do all that. I don't think she'd get tired to do so all this time. She just wants to continue on. The National Tour would end in December during Christmas Vacation. She wants to enjoy it anytime without getting tired. She's not worrying about telling her father about Marci right now, thank god. Marci is excited to do so, too.

"I'll never going to stop to play Annie. I love playing her," said Mary Anne.

"I'm not stopping either since I enjoy playing Pepper," said Marci.

"Aren't you two going to get tired of playing them?" asked Dawn.

"No way! Are you kidding me?" asked Mary Anne.

"Yeah. We love being on Annie," said Marci.

"Exactly," said Mary Anne.

"Are you in the rush to take over for me and the others?" asked Marci.

"Right on, Marci," agreed Kathi who was with her friends.

Mary Anne and Patti agreed with Marci as well. I give Marci extra credit for that. I was impressed.

"You don't see me rushing Mary Anne to get tired to take over for her. You have to wait patiently like I am," said Kathi.

Dawn didn't say anything and walked away to her spot.

"Very good, Marci," I said. "That should make her wait without complaining."

"I hope so," said Marci.

A week later, we started the National Tour for the schools at Stoneybrook High School. After that, we'd be doing Stoneybrook Elementary School, Kelsy Middle School, Stoneybrook Academy, and Stoneybrook Day School. Then we'd be doing Stamford next after doing the last school National Tour. Honestly, Mary Anne was thrilled and guess what, she did more than just good, she was excellent once again and she was famous because everyone loved her and wanted their pictures taken with her in it. They even asked her for their autographs. This is why she will not get tired of playing Annie ever. She'd tell these stories to her children one day.

"You were awesome," a voice was heard behind Mary Anne.

When she turned, it was her grandmother who surprised her at the high school.

"Grandma Verna," said Mary Anne as she went to hug her grandmother. "This is a wonderful surprise."

"I heard you were doing Annie, so I decided to watch you perform and surprise you," said Grandma Verna.

"Wow, thank you," said Mary Anne with happy tears. "I love that."

"You should see her during the rehearsals, she'd sing and doing her lines without using a script and we were all shocked that she could do that," I said.

"That was something. I never seen anyone doing that in my whole life," said Grandma Verna.

"That's we all said," I said.

"I also heard you did the movie of Annie as well," said Grandma Verna.

"We sure did and had a fun time and we recorded the soundtrack in Hollywood," said Mary Anne. "I was also on Tony Awards performing Tomorrow."

"I bet you were thrilled about that," said her grandmother.

"Yes," said Mary Anne.

A few days later, guess who finally apologized: Dawn. Thank goodness for that, right? Mary Anne

managed to forgive her sister. That's another good thing. You could tell Marci really told Dawn off the other day. We can't wait to do Stoneybrook Elementary School next. A few weeks later, we started doing Stamford Schools and Mary Anne still had fun. She still didn't miss one note of any songs and didn't miss one line either.

The End.