



The Road To Home

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Category: Mystery & Suspense,, Bookies,

Description:

Total Pages (Source): 21

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Stephanie Louann Jennings like most young almost adults was allowed to be a child when she was little. She believed in most if not all holidays, even though her mother wouldn't let her participate in any of the fun things that went along with those holidays.

She remembered that when she was five her mother got mad because the church was having a Christmas party along with another church of the same denomination in a bigger town. Her mother flatly refused to let her go even though the party was held in their little town.

Santa was going to be there and all she wanted was one doll. The last Christmas she got a doll but it was just a little three inch flexible one that the dog next door chewed it's head off. This one she wanted it to be a walking doll that talked. She knew if she couldn't go then he wouldn't know what she wanted.

She watched out her room's window until she saw him getting out of his horse drawn sleigh then ran out the back door. When she got close enough she yelled please Santa stop so I can tell you what I want. My momma won't let me come inside. Santa stopped for her and she gave him her list.

That Christmas a gift was left outside her window exactly where she asked him to. Her mother was furious with her until her grandma told her that she had gotten it for her and placed it outside of her window where she could see it. It was the doll she asked for.

Her grandmother went to that church but for some reason her mother didn't go and wouldn't allow Stephanie to go with grandma. Her grandma wasn't allowed to take

any pictures of her to show the other members of her church.

What Stephanie didn't know at that time the preacher was Santa and knowing that her grandmother couldn't afford things that cost over a dollar or two . The money had was spent to pay their bills and food.

The doll she got the year before came out of the church's toy box. Her grandmother washed the doll's hair and clothes. He bought it with the permission of the deacons and placed it under her window where she found it Christmas Day. She had very little contact with other children.

She attended a home schooled program at a retired school teacher's home. There were only three children that attended the home school. The other two children was disabled and couldn't get around at the regular school and wasn't at the teacher's house when Stephanie was

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Her mother had told everyone in town that she was a very sick girl who couldn't be around any other children. When it was time to take school photos her mother kept her home so there was no pictures to show anyone.

One day Stephanie asked her to come out and play with her. Her mother yelled at her I said No why don't you play with your grandmother I know she wished you were her daughter. Stephanie didn't know what to think except that her momma didn't love here any more.

Some of the other adults at church thought that her mother Marsha had a mental illness of some kind that was causing her not to be able to work and provide for her daughter due to she was healthy enough to hold down a job and she wasn't needed to take care of her mother Even her mother had said numerous of time that she would take care of Stephanie most of the time.

The Next Spring Stephanie's family moved to a little house on the outskirts of town. Her mother drove her to the retired school teacher's house for her classes. She told the teacher that she belonged to a religion who does not believe in taking pictures or using a computer. the school work was done on paper.

The little one story white farmhouse It had bushes almost as tall as trees lining the outer edge of the property. It was invisible from the road. Stephanie wasn't allowed to play in the front or side yards leaving only a small back yard to play in.

Her mother told her the owner didn't want the yard or bushes ruined. She wasn't allowed to have any kind of a pet not even goldfish. Stephanie saw a rope hanging from a big oak tree in the back yard. She wished that she could have a swing hanging

from the tree.

The owners of the house was a farmer and his wife that lived a mile or so down the road. The man was out mowing in the summer heat. He noticed Stephanie out doors and asked her if she fill his water bottle up. She was glad to help.

Even though he was a man in his older 50's Stephanie's mother Marsha rushed out of the house. She appologized to him for her daughter's interrupting him as he mowed. He told her that he was the one who interrupted Stephanie playing asking her for water.

She wondered if there was a reason for the rope hanging from the tree. he commented when he was about her age his father had put a tire swing up He said it kept his free time occupied. Stephanie spoke up and said she wished she had a swing. Early the next morning he was out putting a tire swing up.

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Her grandmother Martha came out and thanked him for that. He told her the winter before he had bought new tires for one of his farm equipment and hadn't gotten rid of the old tires. He thought about using them some way and hadn't thought of any way.

Stephanie's grandmother Martha told him that spot by his garden would be a good place to put them and plant herbs or flowers in them. He told her that was a good idea Stephanie remember she was ten that summer. That fall her mother worked the fields with other temporary farm help.

Her grandmother Martha helped in the house making breads, pies, jams for sale at their little road side market plus bags of herbs that was grown in the couple's old tires of all sizes garden. The farmer's wife enjoyed Stephanie's grandmother's company.

That fall the farmer found a bunch of rats in his barns where he wasn't able to store any of his grains so he went to a friend and got several cats. Three for each barn including the barn behind Stephanie's house. One cat was so tiny. It was a calico. Stephanie named her patches.

The farmer told her she had a job taking care of that baby until she turn a year old. She kept the kitten on her covered back porch. She knew that her mother hated the kitten but left it alone and made sure Stephanie took care of patches.

Patches kept the field mice and farm rats away from Stephanie's house. The next year Stephanie asked her mother if she could help at the farm . you would have thought she had committed a crime of some kind. Stephanie was starting to wonder if there was something wrong with her mother.

The next week she found the kitten dead in the trash burn pile. Every one said the cat wouldn't have jumped into a fire by itself. When her mother Marsha caught Stephanie crying over Patches she got onto her and called he a crybaby and told her it was just a stupid cat any way

Marsha started hanging out with the younger group of farm hands who loved to drink and party. and staying out late at night. When Marsha did come home she would wake both Stephanie and her grandmother Martha up demand them to fix her something to eat.

One night she was so mean she threw a lite cigarette into her mother's lap. It caught on fire. Stephanie's grandmother Martha tried using her hands to put the fire out Stephanie knew that her grandmother was having trouble walking. Stephanie dumped a glass of water onto her grandma's lap.

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She helped her to take care of the burns on her legs and hands. She yelled back at her mother telling her that she hated her. After that night she made sure that both of their rooms were locked After her mother took the door off of it's hinges Stephanie begin to lock the doors.

One night she threatened to call the police so Marsha slept on the back porch. The next day she swore that she would burn the house down with both of them in the house. After that night Stephanie would fix her mother something to eat then just warmed it up in the microwave.

Most of the time Marsha never asked how Martha was. Martha had a small stroke . It took her awhile before she got her strength back up and after three years she was able to walk again.

Stephanie started seeing her grandmother's syringes disappearing then she started seeing needle marks on her mother's arms and knew her friends and her was using her grandmother's insulin syringes to get high on with illegal drugs.

She started seeing her mother bringing in the younger men into the house. She would go into her grandmother's room and sleep. When Stephanie was fourteen her mother Marsha was arrested in a drug raid and spent almost two years in a state rehab since it was her first time being arrested.

Stephanie helped the farmer's wife cleaning her house and learning how to can and even embroidery dollies, table clothes, pillow cases, and tee towels to sell at the farmer's market.

Everything that she could do to make money to pay the bills. With her grandmother Martha's social security check. She asked the farmer's wife if she could help her out by paying for an ad in the nearest town stating she would babysit one or two children.

She wasn't sure how much she should charge but she stated in the ad fifty dollars a week. it wasn't long before she had two little girls coming over five days a week. That extra one hundred a week really helped out.

She told the mother of the two little girls that she was already sixteen years old. Even with limited ability her grandmother helped with the two little girls. They were taken very good care. Stephanie feed them gave them a bath, played with them and even had the two little girls counting with pennies.

Their parents was extremely glad with their babysitter and hated when they had to be relocated out of town to find them jobs. Stephanie was abled to save some money although it wouldn't last long.

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Stephanie knew it was just a matter of time before her mother would be released and all the trouble would start again. She also knew her grandmother wouldn't be around too much longer so she asked the farmer's wife to pick up a cheap camera and take pictures of both of them together. She was happy to do that.

Stephanie finally had a picture of her grandma and here. Her grandmother told her when your momma gets out you need to hide our picture from her. If you don't she will get extremely mad at both of us.

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Every so often while Stephanie was young she remember grandma working on the lining of her box springs. Now she might be able to buy her a new bed. She thought grandma would be so happy.

She asked the farmer and his wife if she could hitch a ride to town with them. She bought a new box springs and mattress with her babysitting money and arranged delivery for the next Monday. She gave them her telephone number.

Early that Monday morning when the phone rang Stephanie was out feeding the chickens. The store told her grandma they was headed out to deliver the bed. By the time they got there Stephanie was now feeding the farmer's dairy cows.

Grandma asked the two young men if they would set the box springs and mattress on the floor in the little room that she had used as a sewing room. When Stephanie came back she asked her why the delivery man hadn't taken the old box springs and mattress.

She thought her grandma would be very happy but she wasn't. She told her that she shouldn't have spent so much money on her. Then grandma hugged her and thanked her for her new box springs and mattress

She also told Stephanie never to get rid of the old box springs for any reason, either by throwing it away or giving it away. Stephanie had never heard or seen her grandmother so displeased about that old box springs and mattress.

Grandma told her they were still in good shape and the little boy who Stephanie had just began babysitting could use it to take a nap in the afternoon on. She said it would

be safer for him than any other bed or the sofa.

He wouldn't be falling off and getting hurt. The next day while Stephanie was helping to pull weeds out of the herb garden her grandmother had a couple of the teen agers help her to take the mattress off and turn the box springs over. She had two more patches to sew onto the lining.

It was done in no time and they had the floor bed back to order. From now on she would sew the patches on top of the box springs. When Stephanie got her paycheck she was old enough to drive.

In her state if they go to school or work they can get their drivers license a half a year sooner. Stephanie studied for her drivers license then took her test and was given a license. The lady at the license office looked at her weird when she proved she had a job to get her license. When she got home she looked at the license.

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She realized instead of being 15 and a half years old the license said 17 and a half. She thought it must have been a typical error but didn't have time to go back. Then she looked at her birth certificate. The date of her birth would make her 17 and a half instead of 15 and a half.

She didn't understand how the state could have goof up on her date of birth. She had other more important things to deal with so she put it out of her mind. Her bosses had a car for sale and Stephanie worked off part of the cost and paid the rest with her baby sitting money.

That left about six hundred dollars still in her possession. She promised herself that she would put the money she spent back into her piggy bank for Christmas gift for her grandmother. She thought about asking her grandmother about the mistake on her birth certificate.

She decided since Little Jamie was coming the next day she needed to get things done before his arrival. She did the supper dishes, swept and mopped the kitchen floor. She did laundry and put them in the right drawer before getting ready for bed.

By then grandma was already asleep. She showered then picked up her dirty clothes and cleaned the shower stall. She sat at her desk and turned on her laptop. She had an email from her mother's counselor at the center. She was due to be released the next month.

Stephanie's mother Marsha was caught outside of the facility after curfew the next night. She claimed that it was hot in her room and she needed some fresh air. The head of the night staff made her do a pee test. She passed the drug test with flying

colors.

The second time there was a different night supervisor and her pee test came out positive. the courts added another six months onto her sentence. The center had a drug problem somewhere so the police searched every inch and came out clean.

After that incident every few days unknown by anyone the police came in and search the facility using a drug sniffing dog. Marsha threw water on him and said he was getting too personal with her. They added another two months on her time.

The judge also ordered no visitation for her to make sure she got cleaned up. Some of the staff there was getting too cozy with the inmate patients was transferred to another state run rehab center or the minimum security prison.

Stephanie continued baby sitting and helping on the farm. She really enjoyed the work plus her friendship with Mr. and Mrs. Owens. She even started taking her grandmother to church every Sunday, She never understood why she couldn't go before.

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Every one there was very nice not like her mother had said. Then she thought that's old water under the bridge I'm going to enjoy my time now here at church and don't worry what momma thought. She's had a loose screw somewhere in her head.

At least that's what the judge thought because he had also ordered one on one counseling for Marsha with a psych doctor. She wondered if that was helping her mother any. Stephanie met a lot of young adults close to her age. She even thought about dating.

But she was so busy working to pay her family's bills and put food on the table. By then her grandmother had gotten so much better. She could walk on her own again, even able to shower on her own. Stephanie still helped her cook though.

She loved baking especially bread and dinner rolls. She enjoyed sitting on the front porch in the evenings either listening to music or reading a book. She thought about getting a dog but for some reason every time she thought about Patches came back.

She could never let that happen to another animal of any kind again. She wished that grandma and her just run away where her mother would never be able to find them. With computers now days she would have someone find them.

She remembered one time her grandmother had said something like that and her mother Marsha told her she would hunt them down and kill both of them. After incident Stephanie's grandma told her that Marsha hadn't really meant that. She loves both of us.

If she had did she sure had very strange way of showing it . It made her wonder if she

had done something to cause her mother to hate her so much. Something had changed. At that moment Stephanie decided to find out what exactly it was.

The next Sunday the preacher informed the congregation that beginning that coming Wednesday evening they were going to have dinner then Wednesday evening service. He told them that the dinner needed to be simple and they would use foam plates and cups.

He explained the reason for using the foam plates and cups was so the women wouldn't be spending the evening cleaning instead of worshiping the Lord. It made a lot of sense. Their first dinner was fried Chicken, green bean and potatoes, corn on the cob, and donuts from the town's bakery.

Stephanie and her grandmother spent the day taking turns watching Little Jamie and frying the chicken. Little Jamie enjoyed helping Stephanie shuck the corn on the cob. Making the green bean casserole was very easy and Mrs. Owens enjoyed cooking for others.

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The preachers wife arrived early to get the water on for the corn. The water was reading when the four cooks arrived at church, Little Jamie's parents both arrived directly from work and was thankful for the meal.

The preacher explained that not every Wednesday night dinner would be that big of a meal thanking Mr. and Mrs. Owens for the chicken and the vegetables from their garden. He also thanked the cooks for their excellent cooking skills. Little Jamie yelled is that me too.

When the preacher spoke he asked him how did he help. Little Jamie put up his hand in a circle movement then lowered them while saying corn. Everyone laughed then Stephanie explained that he helped her to shucle the corn. The preacher thanked him personally for doing such a good job.

After the first Wednesday Little Jamie had to help in one way or another. One of the Wednesdays he helped roll the flatware in the knapkins. He put three knives in one knakin, three forks in one knapkin, and three spoons in one knapkin,

Every one had to ask another member if they could exchange a fork for one of their spoons or knives, It was a hilarious sight to be seen. Little Jamie was given the credit for trying. Stephanie thought for a little three year old it was a good job.

From that Wednesday on Stephanie had little Jamie wrap the flatware then she would exchange them for the ones she had wrapped. When she got home she would unwrap them then would rewrap for the next week and put them in the container.

The next week Marsha was released from the state run rehab center. For awhile

Marsha kept clean and followed all of the rules set by the state then one night she disappeared and when she came back there were new needle marks on her arms.

She was so incoherent she wasn't making any sense. She kept saying to Stephanie don't call me momma I'm not your mother. From that night on Stephanie even hid her car keys from her mother. One time when Marsha couldn't get a hold on Stephanie's car keys she burned down the barn that sat in the back yard.

Mr. and Mrs. Owens didn't know how the barn caught on fire but there was a storm that hit the area with lightening and a lot of very loud thunder. Their insurance agent wasn't sure what had happen but finally agreed it could have been mother nature and settled with them.

Stephanie had seen her mother do it but didn't want to turn her mother into the police because she was her mother after all and even if Marsha didn't love her she still loved her mother. Since it happened in the middle of the night no one would suspect her of lying.

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In her heart Stephanie knew she needed to forgive her mother of all of her mistakes just like God forgives people of their mistakes. Marsha checked herself into the rehab to get clean again.

Shortly after that incident little Jamie's parents decided they wanted Jamie to go to daycare to be around more children of his age. Stephanie knew it was because of her mother.

She saw Grandma Martha had been patching up the old box springs again. Stephanie noticed the patches had numbers on them. She thought that was odd since she no longer was watching little Jamie.

The patches looked like a half size greeting card envelope like you can buy at a store but made out of cloth. She didn't pay that much attention to the number on the patch and wasn't going to embarrass her asking her what she was doing.

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With a record Marsha couldn't find jobs as a cashier, a bank teller, selling ice cream. Any where she had to handle money. Tha farm worker was about it. She really did try to stay clean but it happened again. The farmer found her shooting up in one of his barns.

He got her to let him take her home. The next day knowing he was going to tell her probation official she decided to leave, She wasn't going back to rehab or jail. She started ram sacking the house trying to find Stephanie's car keys.

She called her friend to come and help her. He showed up even higher than she was. He started slapping grandma Martha asking her where Stephanie hid the keys. Marsha was yelling for him to stop. He wanted to know if any one had any amount of cash on them.

Stephanie heard the commotion and came running into the house. This time right into the hands of a strung out protental murder. She gave him the keys to her car while her mother was trying to scoot the table over a few feet.

He wasn't going to leave without killing somebody unless he got money. Stephanie gave him the six hundred dollars hoping he would leave but he demanded more than that. He told her if she got that for turning tricks like her old momma she had to have more and want it now

Marsha finally got the table moved and found the loose hardwood board. She reached in and took out a little bag and threw it at him. He yelled I knew you were hiding my stash from me. I should just shoot you now and end your miserable life.

Stephanie asked her mother where she got all of that money. That man told her baby cakes your old lady has been turning tricks and selling drugs for me. You can come to and get in on the game. I'm sure there would be plenty of Johns willing to pay high bucks for you.

Marsha told him to leave her alone and picked up a knife to defend her. He left after she put a good slash on his arm. He threatened to come back and get even with all three of them just like he did Ruby and Samatha.

When he heard police sirens getting closer to the house he ran taking Stephanie's car and the bag of money. Marsha was still reeling from the drug she had shot up. When the police got their reports Marsha told the officers that she had shot up with the man in one of the barns.

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Grandma Martha told them only because he had threatened her if she didn't he would give her a deadly dose then laughed Stephanie for the first time hearing that told the officers that he had grabbed her and was going to make her go with him.

Then and only then did Marsha got a knife out and slashed his arm with it to make him let go of her. The police radio went off with another officer in high speed chase with him. They could hear gun shots over the radio then a big bang and some kind of explosion.

Then that officer came on and inform his fellow officers that he had ran into a gas pump and the car exploded killing the driver. The town talked about for weeks That is when Marsha went back to rehab this time on her own to get clean for good this time.

When she got out there was a job at the laundry mat in town waiting for her. Stephanie wasn't able to buy another car. The farmer loaned them another car just to go to work and back home. Every evening they returned the car back to him.

Stephanie was working at the city market as a evening manager. When Marsha got off of work she would walk down to the market to meet Stephanie then Stephanie would take her home the return to the market. it was nightly thing.

On her way back she would stop at the local drive ins and get either an ice cold Cherry Limeade or a medium Strawberry Banana, and Pineapple shake. This particular evening something strange occurred. The car business lot had a couple of men that wasn't familiar in town with a car hauler attached to a semi tractor.

The men's crew of six got behind the steering wheel of six different cars. After they

loaded the cars onto the hauler they. Two men where in the truck pulling the hauler the other six got into the same van.

Stephanie noticed the truck and car hauler was missing license plates. The van's clearly could be seen. Stephanie called the police and reported it. They were on their way but told her if she had anymore information that the gang was doing anything illegal to let them know.

She had them on the farmer's phone's PA's system. She pulled into the lot in front of the truck with the car hauler attached to it and said I see old man Jones has you working late. He answered yes he sure does.

One of the police cars was just down the street and radioed they were on their way. Stephanie knew they wouldn't get away so she pulled out of the way to let the police do their business. Gun fire erupted and six of the men were killed but that night they also lost an officer.

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The town and car dealer owner was happy that Stephanie was there and smart enough on her toes to say the wrong name to alert the police. The newspaper from the town a little ways away from her tiny town. The car dealer gave her a brand new car of her own.

The newspaper took a photo of her beside her new car. It wasn't two weeks later every news station reporting that she a missing girl who disappeared in the woods some hundred mile up north. That girl's last name was the same as Stephanie.

Grandma Martha showed Stephanie's birth certificate to the authorities. After investigating the authorities told the newspaper this girl is Stephanie Louann Jennings. Finally the newspaper left town. Stephanie wondered why she had thought she was younger.

About a month later one nosy news reporter dug around and found a old tape where he had found the body of a little unknown girl in the middle of the woods thrown down in the well. He kept coming around and asking her at the city market if she had a picture of her when she was younger.

The last time he was there he made such a ruckus that he got Stephanie fired. By the time Stephanie gathered her things in her locker and walked out the door the police had made sure he left the area he had left an envelope on her car.

It contained a picture of a little girl who strangely resembled her and a photo of a bridge in a couple of counties over. On the back of the picture he wrote The Road To Home then the town's name. She wondered if she had been kidnapped when she was small.

That night she decided to really find out the truth. Neither her mother or grandmother would answer her questions. She knew there was something strange going on and had been for a very long time. She didn't like to be lied to by both of them.

She packed her bag and left before either of them woke up. She was on her way to Hawthorne. She saw the bridge just like in the reporter's picture. She stayed to the right after crossing the bridge.

Not quite a half of a mile down the road was the Hawthorne Cemetery. She drove around in the cemetery looking at grave markers. She stopped and talked to one of the ground crew. She was directed to the grave of that little girl.

For some strange reason she felt like that little girl's body was the real Stephanie Louann Jennings and not her. She needed to know more. She went to the newspaper office and wanted to look in their archives.

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She asked for the news reporter Al Hampton. No one knew a Al Hampton. She decided to do a search of the name Jennings in the area. There was a religious cult ran by a man named Scott Hewitt. Him and two sisters started it. He thought of himself as God.

The first names of the two sisters was Marsha and Ruby. Stephanie felt as though she was on the right track. They had a country house with several out buildings. Then things went wrong and the police found the burned remains of one sister and the body of a little girl in the well it went from a commune to an cult of some kind.

The cult reached out to other young adults and it grew at an alarming rate and hit the police radar detector as a group that was into every thing from drugs to selling illegal firearms to other ungodly crimes like robbery, breaking into people's houses.

She talked to real estate agent that was trying to sell the property for the city who had compensated it for non tax payments. The agent took her out to the property. She saw the well that they found the little girl's body in.

Then she toured the buildings on the property. One had an old canopy bed in it along with a stuff bunny. Somewhere in Stephanie's mind floppy popped up. Then she remembered or maybe a vision of a man throwing Floppy across the floor.

He was extremely agitated and picked up a sword and was coming after her and a lady and was going to kill them. Then there was another lady with another little girl who tried to stop it and he ran out of the house with him on their tail. It gave the lady time to get the little girl in the house to safety on a horse.

Stephanie still had the old stuffed bunny in her arms when the real estate agent told her he really needed to get back to town. She carried Floppy out to the car. They were almost back to town when she realized she still had Floppy.

The agent told her to keep it the city was going to bring in dumpsters and get the place up for sale. The bunny wouldn't be missed by the trash company. She laughed and looked at her bunny and said you have just been saved from being buried in a city landfill.

She decided that place might hold some answers but back home was where she would really get the answers she was seeking. She ate at a little café. One of the waitresses remembered her going into the newspaper office. They struck up a conversation about that commune or whatever it was.

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The waitress said she remembered the sisters and their two little girls. Both of the sister's babies father was Scott something.. Stephanie knew her father's name now.. She drove about half way back home and felt really tired so she stopped at a little motel to get a couple of hours of sleep. When she woke up she drove the rest of the way home.

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When Stephanie arrived back home she learned that Marsha had left to find work in another town. By then grandma Martha had been so beside herself worried about both of her girls she had another stroke from her diabetes and heart problems.

She had to be hospitalized then put in a nursing facility to get the medical help she so desperately needed to get back onto her feet. By then Stephanie wasn't sure if she was her real grandma but it didn't matter she had been there for her all of these years so she wasn't going to turn her back on her.

All of grandma's care was expensive and there wasn't any way the government was going to be reimbursed the money they were putting out so Stephanie knew she had to down size. She put her car up for sale. That paid grandma's bill to that point. Mrs. Owens had loaned Stephanie their car to go get her grandmother.

Stephanie drove her home and settled her into a hospital bed. To make room she was going to have to do one of the two only possible things to make room. She would either have to sell her grandmother's new box springs and mattress or put them in the other room.

She would have to throw away her grandmother's old box springs and mattress. She pushed the old mattress out onto the back porch then took a few minutes to rest up. After that she tackled the box springs. For the first time she really saw the patches.

She was going to leave them there but something told her that her grandmother had spent so much time on making those patches. She wondered why not just sew blank patches onto the box springs and what was her reason for numbering them.

Was it to know how many patches it took to repair the bed? Stephanie thought no because she continued after she got her new set. She carefully started taking the patches off. She realized the box springs didn't have any holes in it.

She took the patches and placed them on her bed. There really wasn't anything wrong with the old set so Stephanie decided to give them away. There was a company who would check out the set and if they were still usable give them to needy person.

Two men came within an hour and loaded the set onto their pickup and was gone. She sat her grandmother's bed up in the little room just in case her mother came back. She maid the bed which she thought a made bed always made the house look better along with a less cluttered place.

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She pushed the hospital bed into her grandmother's room. It was so much easier to keep the house clean that way. By then her grandmother was home from her doctor's appointment. They ate a heart healthy diabetic supper. After they sat out on the front porch.

Stephanie asked her grandmother about the patches. Her grandmother didn't want to talk about it. She told her when the time comes but sweetheart this really isn't the time. I don't need anymore stress right now.

Stephanie knew that was true and when she was alone she would see what all of those patches was about. Her grandmother had made it easier for her by numbering them. Later that night Stephanie couldn't sleep with the patches on her mind. She decided to get the first few patches out and really examine them better.

They just wasn't patches that her grandmother Martha made. They were beautiful sewn envelopes. The front had numbers embroidered on them. The back flap had velcro strips that could be opened then closed back up again.

They were hand stitched around the edges to make the fabric envelopes with a beautiful rose in the middle with a number in the middle of the Rose. Stephanie opened the envelope that was numbered one. It was a picture of her mother and her along with her grandmother.

The picture was taken at the Hutton County Hospital just inside the maternity ward door next to the visitor's sign in desk. They were being released that day. The date on the picture was June 19,1993 .We just named our little angel Stephanie Louann.

They seemed to be very happy. There was a little note inside of the envelope stating our family has just been blessed by God. It made Stephanie happy to find out she really was seventeen almost eighteen. Then the question why did they lie to me and every one else about my age came creepy into her mind.

She hoped that when she open up the envelopes that it didn't lead to more questions than answers. She opened up the second envelope. Inside she found another picture of her by a Christmas tree. On the back of it Our angel's first Christmas but the letter inside read We need to keep her birth from certain people a secret I'm not sure how we can do this but I'll be praying to God for the answer.

The third envelope had a picture of her on her first birthday. God answered my prayers. until she gets a little older I will move frequently and hide our beautiful angel. Only I will know the truth for now, not even our little Stephanie. Marsha might at certain times.

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Stephanie had another question on her mind. If they were her real mother and grandmother what were they hiding from or who were they hiding from? She wanted to read more but she needed to get to bed to be able to get up early and go job hunting.

The next morning Stephanie was up and showered and took her little golf cart into town using the back road. She knew old man Wilson would let her hook the cart up to an electric charger in his garage for the day.

She didn't want to borrow another car until she had the money to buy another car. She prayed that she would get another job soon. The donut shop just across from old man Wilson's garage had a help wanted sign in their window. So did the laundry matt next to it.

Both places was owned by a widow Mrs. Ruth Gibson She saw Mrs. Gibson sitting at a little table with a clipboard full of applications. She waved at her while crossing the street. Stephanie approached Mrs. Gibson and told her she was looking for a job.

Mrs. Gibson sighed a breath of relief and said God has just answered my prayers. sweetheart I could use you for both places. You work here in the mornings then the laundry when this shop closes at noon. I enjoy eating your cream beef and biscuits at church on the fourth Sunday of the month.

Then she asked can you start today. Stephanie nodded her head and said I sure can. and I'll be here six o'clock every morning on the dot. Every one in town really like hard workers like Stephanie. Stephanie informed her I can work in the laundry today if you need me to.

She used the donut shop's phone to let her grandmother she was working and would be home around seven that evening. When old man Wilson came over at eleven thirty to eat Stephanie asked if it was alright to pick up her golf cart around six thirty. he told her that would be fine.

He had a used car that he fixed up for sale then the owner decide they didn't want to spend that money on fixing the car and went to the car dealership instead signing their old car over to Old man Wilson for the work he did on it.

Stephanie only started working for Mrs. Gibson when she saw the same man that wouldn't quit hounding her and left the photo of a bridge on her car. He was walking around that end of the town. She wondered if he was stalking her.

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The next morning she found the same picture of what looked like the same bridge in the donut shop's floor which had been deposited there through the mail slot. He had to have put it there after the laundry matt closed for the night.

This time on the back was written you went to the wrong town. This time cross the bridge coming from the opposite way then take the first right. Stephanie folded the picture and slid it into her pocket. She didn't know if her bringing it up would cause any stress on her grandmother.

She could tell her that she had to work on her day off and be back home before she would be missed. It was only a three hour drive each way. The only thing is she didn't like lying to her grandmother.

On that Sunday she decided to Check out the other way just in case she wasn't being led on. She fed her grandmother with her famous pumpkin pancakeswith a diabetic syrup then made her lunch and left. Making her lunch she didn't have to lie just letting her assumed she had to work.

She left a note with a copy of the bridge on her granmother's nightstand. She would be there before noon and back before four. A nice country ride on her day off. She needed to find out just who this man was. After turning off of the highway she possibly could make up some time.

She crossed the bridge exactly at 11:45 A.M. on that Saturday morning. She turned her car around and crossed the bridge heading in the right direction then turned right knowing she had to be in the right road now. She continued to drive the mile into that town

As she approached the town something strange she saw spooked her. There was a car just like hers that had been crashed head on into a big tree beside the road. Then she saw a girl who was almost an identical twin of hers. When she ran to the girl's side she begged her to get her out of this town. The girl asked her to reach into the car and pull out a big brown envelope with her papers in it.

Stephanie helped the girl into her car and turned around and retrieved the envelope and left. The girl needed medical help but begged Stephanie not to take her to any hospital in this state. Stephanie drove back across the line to the closest clinic she knew would still be open. One of the nurses went to church with Stephanie.

The girl said her name was Samantha and she was sixteen. She told the nurse that she had an older half sister but her kin folks wouldn't let her leave to find her. She wanted to be so much of her big sister's life.

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She stayed recovering from her injuries for the next week and a half. Stephanie visited her every day that she didn't have to work. Samantha told her that her mother's name was Ruby. Stephanie remembered that one friend of her mothers talking crazy about doing whatever he did to Ruby and Samantha he could do to them.

That was too much of consequences not to be related to her in some way. They had plenty of room at the house for Samatha to be able live with them. When Samantha was released from the clinic Stephanie took Samatha home to meet her grandmother. Samantha had her birth certificate with her. She showed it to Stephanie's grandmother.

Granma Martha went into her closet and came out with a book of some kind enclosed in the same kind of patch envelope. She asked Stephanie to bring the patches to her. They sat around the dinning room table.

Stephanie read the letter to Samantha and showed her the baby picture. Samantha excused herself to retrieve the brown envelope. She opened the envelope In it was many pictures of her of all ages and some of her mother Ruby.

Grandma Martha said to both of them sweethearts my book, Samantha's envelope and the patches tells all about our family. I have one daughter. Her name is Marsha . When she was almost a young woman she started seeing a young man.

They would meet at the football games then sneak into the motel on the closed highway to have sexual relations with each other. Then his father found out and wouldn't let him see her anymore. That young man never knew that Marsha was pregnant.

Marsha gave birth to Stephanie. She was alright for awhile then she became sick. I'm not talking psychical I wished that was the case for so many years now. One morning I was waken by her hands around my neck. She almost strangled me to death.

She told the police she thought I had done away with her mother. She told them her name was Ruby. I don't know where she got that name from. She ran away. I didn't see her for a long time. One time she called me while she was at a hospital and told me that she had just given birth to a little girl.

Then out of nowhere she changed back into Ruby and was cussing me out. I did some checking and found out that she had another little girl. Every time she came back she thought Stephanie was Samantha and it was so hard to keep straight plus her illness came and went from the drug abuse. Some of her needle marks she couldn't have done on her own.

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Grandma looked at Samantha's birth certificate and she told both of the young ladies you are not half sisters both of you have the same father and mother but poor Marsha was Ruby when she gave birth to sweet little Samantha. When Stephanie showed the picture of the man outside of the donut shop.

Samantha told them that's grandpa Galloway. When they lined up the pictures, grandma letters and grandma's journal told the whole story of a family torn apart by mental illness. Both of the girls called their grandpa. The next day he visited both of them.

He told them a story that he had been told on numerous times that their mother when she became manic that she had Samantha hide in various places and told him she had ran away. he looked around cities around the area for his little girl and came here and saw you.

Stephanie asked him that's why you called Samantha. He answered yes and then you told me you were Stephanie. I thought you had your mother's illness so I left the pictures for you to find your way home. he also told her he didn't know he had a older granddaughter. He told them God wanted us all to know about each other. Grandpa Galloway decided to move to their little town of Morley. Now both of the girls really have a family, they have both their grandmother and their grandfather to enjoy their favorite holidays and every Sunday going to church together, and most of all being a family

The End